



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

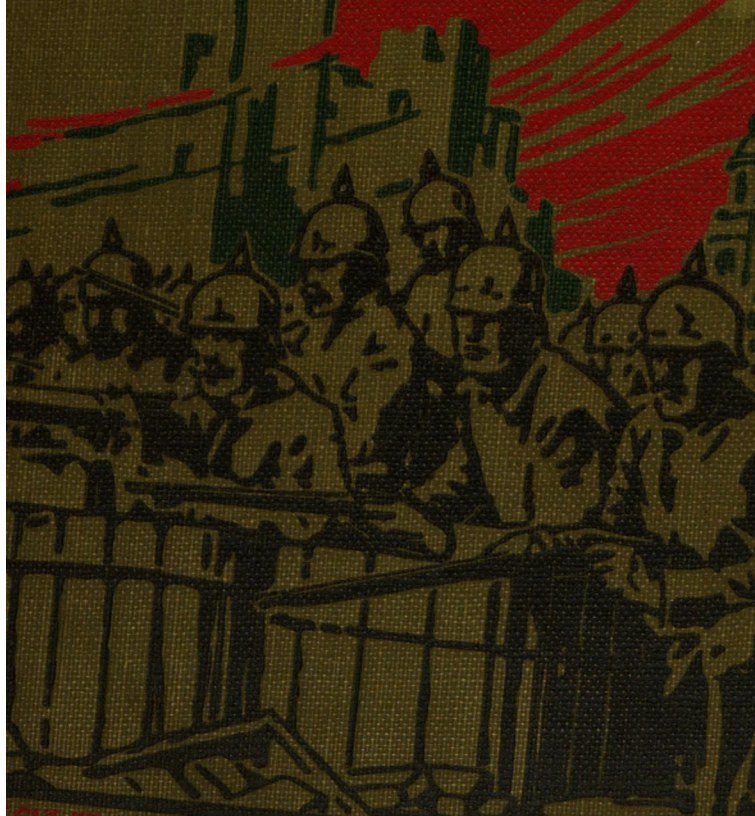
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

INVASION *of the* UNITED STATES



CLE SAM'S BOYS *at the*
CAPTURE OF BOSTON
IRVING LAMONT

CONQUERS
of the
UNITED



KD 5781

The Invasion of the United States

OR

Uncle Sam's Boys at the Capture of Boston

By

H. IRVING HANCOCK

**Author of In the Battle for New York, At the Defense of Pittsburgh,
Making the Last Stand for Old Glory, etc.**

Gift of The People of the United States
Through the Victory Back Campaign
Illustrated
(A. L. A. — A. R. C. — U. S. C.)
To the Armed Forces and Merchant Marine

P H I L A D E L P H I A
HENRY ALTEMUS COMPANY

KD 5781

**COPYRIGHT, 1916, BY
HOWARD E. ALTEMUS**



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. OFF TO MEET THE GERMAN FLEET.....	7
II. WHEN THE SHELLS BEGAN TO FLY.....	25
III. THROUGH THE MORNING OF DISASTER.....	36
IV. SERVING IN THE SHORE TRENCHES.....	51
V. AT GRIPS WITH THE INVADERS.....	63
VI. ORDERED TO UNKNOWN DUTY.....	74
VII. A BREATH AT THE NEW POST.....	82
VIII. WITH THE BATTLE'S SKULKERS.....	93
IX. IN THE WIRE ENTANGLEMENTS.....	102
X. THE BLACK FORGETFULNESS.....	110
XI. NEW DOINGS IN BOSTON TOWN.....	121
XII. ON THE HEADQUARTERS MISSION.....	129
XIII. IN THE PRESENCE OF THE FIELD MARSHALL.....	139
XIV. A GERMAN DECISION.....	150
XV. HURLED INTO THE ENEMY'S FACE.....	157
XVI. THE YANKEE TRICK IN THE HILLS.....	167
XVII. THE DASH IN THE NIGHT.....	181
XVIII. BERT CLAIMS A GERMAN FOR HIS OWN.....	189
XIX. WITH THE GHOST OF THE ARMY.....	197
XX. A DUEL IN THE AIR—OR SUICIDE?.....	207
XXI. THE BIRDMEN'S PRIZE DISCOVERY.....	219
XXII. OVER THE ENEMY'S LINE IS OUT.....	226
XXIII. THE BITTERNESS OF THE VANQUISHED.....	238
XXIV. CONCLUSION	247

The Invasion of the United States

CHAPTER I

OFF TO MEET THE GERMAN FLEET

“L IEUTENANT PRESCOTT!”

“Here, sir,” answered the young infantry lieutenant, turning away from the trench digging he was supervising.

“These motor cars are bringing up the reserve ammunition for the battalion. I will direct the drivers to report to you. Stand here, that I may point you out.”

With this terse command the staff officer rode away at a gallop as the two officers exchanged salutes.

“Honk! honk! Swaying, their machinery rattling, four touring cars came rapidly along the rough new road. The drivers had to use great care not to run down either the soldiers hastening from one task to another, or the hundreds of citizens, who, mostly white-faced and anxious, stood about watching the swift work of the military.

"Lientenant Prescott!"

"Sir," answered the young lieutenant, saluting Captain Follinsbee, after waving a hand to hold up the arriving cars.

"Clear these civilians out of the way," directed the captain, who, in the absence of Major Foster, was ranking officer of this battalion of the Thirty-eighth Regulars.

"Very good, sir," Prescott replied. **"Sergeant Kelly! Take twenty men and get all civilians back out of the way—at least half a mile back. Use all possible courtesy, but get them back out of our way as fast as you can."**

Within twenty seconds Prescott had directed the drivers just where to unload the ammunition. Each car had brought up twenty cases of cartridges. As each case contained a thousand rounds, there were eighty thousand cartridges in the lot. Among the six hundred men of the battalion, however, it meant but about a hundred and thirty rounds apiece—not enough to last half a day of ordinary fighting.

Within two minutes' time Prescott directed the placing of the ammunition, gave Sergeant Kelly his orders, delivered working orders at four points along the length of the trench, and now halted, removing his field sombrero and allowing the breeze from the ocean to play upon his perspiring forehead.

For these were feverish, yet carefully controlled, preparations. On this spring day in the year 1920 a huge, capable German battle-ship fleet was steaming toward some point, between Portland and New York, on the North Atlantic Coast. Back of this fleet was another flotilla of transports carrying a German army numbering, according to different estimates, between a hundred and twenty-five thousand and two hundred thousand veteran German troops.

Yes, the United States was at war with a first-class European power, though it was a war that many Americans had noisily predicted would prove impossible and could never happen. War had been declared only the evening before, and the country was in a frenzied state, every man outside of the Army and Navy having a different idea as to what should be done to save the country.

Though it was not yet known certainly that the Germans would attack the Massachusetts coast, an army had hastily been collected and rushed to the coast of the Bay State north of Boston. There were eleven thousand Regular troops, twenty-one thousand National Guardsmen and some six thousand more or less trained troops of other kinds, including college and high school battalions. This force had been

thrown in swiftly at points around Marblehead, Salem and Beverly Farms. In case it should prove that the troops were not needed there, but were urgently wanted elsewhere, a line of six thousand automobiles waited a few miles back from the coast. These cars would snatch up the army and hurl it pell-mell to the real point of attack that might develop.

Sergeant Kelly's task of driving back the anxious civilians was not an easy one.

"Bedad, I don't want to shoot ye, ye poor innocents," grumbled the good-natured Kelly. "Can't I buy yez off in some way? But get back wid yez, annyway!"

"Any news from the enemy yet, sir?" asked Lieutenant Prescott, as Captain Follinsbee strode up.

"Not a word, Mr. Prescott," replied the older officer. "Some of our airships are out two or three hundred miles at sea—if their engines haven't blown up."

"We're mighty weak in aircraft, are we not, Captain?"

"As we are in everything else needed in this supreme hour of fighting," returned Captain Follinsbee in a tone of deep disgust. "Mr. Prescott, if the Americans are headed toward complete disaster at last, be sure that they fully deserve it. For years the Americans have been

told, daily, that they were not prepared for just such an invasion as is now coming upon us. The military experts of this country have begged Congress to authorize a larger and more efficient fleet, and to provide an army large enough for handling capably anything that an enemy might try to do to us. But Congress and the people have gone on laughing—and now, over night, we find ourselves at war, and an enemy at our gates in numbers that assure the capture of every really valuable part of this country of ours!”

“But at least, sir, our President saw this thing coming days enough ago so that he has been able to place troops at many points on the coast.”

“It won’t do us any good,” responded Captain Follinsbee, lowering his voice. “We have here close to forty thousand troops, but we’re not capable of holding back an equal number of troops of the kind we may have to fight. And instead of being allowed to fight on equal terms we have reason to believe that we shall be assailed by at least three times our number of the enemy.”

Rattle, bang! Clack, clack! At least a hundred automobiles and automobile trucks came rolling up, loaded with supplies of one kind and another for the busy, seething line of intended

defense. Out at sea the flight inward of an airship was observed.

"Here comes news!" rose from thousands of throats, soldiers and the more distant populace mingling their voices.

Then another great cheer went up, reaching the toiling men in the trenches from a distance of at least two miles. Those who turned saw at the skyline on the rise of ground behind them the clearly outlined figures of men and horses, of field guns and caissons and the supply train of a regiment of field artillery moving into position.

"Thank goodness for the field artillery!" breathed Prescott fervently. "I had feared that the powers that be wouldn't get it here in time for it to be of any use to us."

"Always provided that the Germans try to land on this coast," supplemented Lieutenant Holmes.

"If we don't fight here, Greg, we'll fight elsewhere," Prescott rejoined. "A big German army is on its way to this country, and wherever it lands, there, or nearby, we shall do some of the fighting. But now our division has at least some of its field artillery."

"We have it until the Germans either capture it or put it out of business with their longer range and vastly superior field artillery. We

are due to learn a few things about fighting from them," predicted Greg gloomily.

His lips firmly compressed, Prescott turned back to supervise the trench building, which was now rapidly nearing completion.

"Here come our own Gridley boys!" cried Greg with enthusiasm, as he pointed along one of the roads, where, in a cloud of dust, a troop of cavalry moved. "Dick, though they're only high school boys, and not trained at all like Regulars, doesn't it seem good, just the same, to see a lot of young fellows from the same good old high school that we attended before we went to West Point?"

Up at a stiff trot rode the schoolboys, commanded by Captain Albert Howard, of the senior class of Gridley High School. Behind him rode two young schoolboy lieutenants and a hundred and ten cadet cavalymen from Gridley. That famous high school had mustered in and trained, during the last four years, a battalion of four companies of school cadets. The other three companies, being infantry instead of cavalry, it had been decided to send the cavalry troop to the front at the President's call. The three companies of infantry had remained at home in Gridley. Of these, many were too young to fight, but the older boys were being trained in cavalry as well as infantry tactics, so

that the cavalrymen who were to see active service might be constantly repleted from the Gridley reserve.

Bert Howard was a true son of the people, his father being a storekeeper in Gridley. Bert had been a leader in his classes and also in high school athletics. From the day he had entered the battalion he had gone in ardently for all the hardest forms of soldiering; he was easily the best young soldier of his age—eighteen—that Gridley had to offer, and he had earned his right to command the troop.

Howard and his comrades had been sworn into the service as cadets, not as volunteers. Hence Bert, though a captain in rank, had been placed under the more immediate orders of Prescott, a lieutenant.

As the bugler, riding immediately in the rear of Howard, pealed out the single short note of the command "halt," the troop and its horses came to an instant standstill, but Howard continued forward at a trot, saluting Prescott and Holmes, then dismounting as he stood at attention before them.

"Are your horses all in good condition, Captain Howard?" Prescott asked.

"Yes, sir; every animal is fit, though they have been off the train but two hours," answered the young cadet trooper respectfully.

“Captain Howard,” continued Prescott, “in case, at any time, you are ordered to fight your men as infantry at this point, you will dismount your men, sending every fourth man back with the horses. The rest of your command you will place in the trenches, to the left of my company. That stake shows the extreme right for your company.”

“Very good, sir,” replied the cadet captain, again saluting. His whole bearing toward these two West Pointers of the regulars was one of extreme respect, bordering almost on veneration. Howard’s jaw was a firm-set one. His eyes, of keen blue, rested squarely on the face of the man with whom he talked. There was nothing boastful in his manner or look; plainly he was a young soldier who could “make good” by the sheer force of doggedly obeying orders.

“You will now, Captain Howard, have your men picket the horses three hundred feet back of your trench. After that you will drill your men in defending the part of the trench assigned to you. You will go through with the whole of the fire discipline except the use of ammunition. You will also drill your men in charging down the slope from the trenches, as well as in falling back and rallying, firing by volleys, both kneeling and from the ground. I

trust, Captain," Prescott wound up, "that none are too tender to endure strenuous drill."

"Fatigue, sir, is an offense for which I'll discipline any man in my command," returned the cadet officer promptly.

Saluting with precision, Bert Howard mounted, riding back to his troop.

"That young fellow, with a little practice in the actual field of war, will make a real soldier," nodded Greg Holmes approvingly. "So, for that matter, will the rest of the fellows in the troop."

"They ought to make soldiers, Greg," Prescott rejoined proudly. "They all come from our good old native town, Gridley."

Quickly the troop horses were picketed. Leaving only half a dozen young troopers to care for the animals, Howard ordered the rest of his men into the trench. Prescott and Holmes, though busy themselves, occasionally found time to give a few moments' keen attention to the drill that the Gridley boys were receiving from Captain Howard, from First Lieutenant Donald Gale and Second Lieutenant Otto Wendt.

"My, those boys are tireless, and there's some fine soldier stuff in them," murmured Lieutenant Greg Holmes, an hour later, as he watched the drill.

"There ought to be good stuff in them," returned Prescott. "Back in 1916 there was a wave of preparedness excitement swept this country, and a lot of high school boys everywhere were drilled enthusiastically. Then, bit by bit, the interest began to die out, and to-day we have comparatively few high schools where real soldiering is taught. But in Gridley the enthusiasm never died out. The battalion has been kept alive and flourishing. The officers, and most of the men, in that troop have been training for four solid years."

From this foremost line of intrenchments Captain Follinsbee's battalion fell back upon other lines, digging new intrenchments, and connecting the same with zig-zagged trench runways. By an hour before sundown there were five parallel lines of trenches, all properly connected.

"It seems to me," muttered Sergeant Kelly, of Prescott's company, "that we're to do more running than fighting. Else, why all the trenches to fall back to?" But the sergeant was too much of a veteran to ask his question in the hearing of an officer.

At last the trench digging was done. Now, just behind the lower line of trenches faggot fires were started by thousands. Before each squatted a soldier—Regular, guardsman or vol-

2—1 *Conquest.*

unteer—bending over a pan of bacon. Bacon, hard tack and coffee constituted the evening meal. The officers had the same fare, but their cooking was performed by privates.

The officers of Captain Follinsbee's command—a battalion of Regular infantry and the cadet troop—sat together behind the nearest enlisted men. The sun, nearing the western horizon, bathed the whole scene in a resplendent golden hue. The cadet officers sat at the edge of the group, holding their peace in the presence of older and real fighting men. But at last Howard, turning his head, saw a sight that impelled him to exclaim:

"Gentlemen, there's a signal breaking out from the peak of the radio tower!"

"It's a signal calling upon the general in command to get in communication with the radio station," explained Captain Follinsbee with lively interest. "That means that General Carleton could not be reached at the end of the telephone wire running to his headquarters, and that his exact location in the field is not known."

"By Jove, sir, that looks decidedly interesting," exclaimed Prescott, rising. "The officer in charge at the radio station would hardly break out that signal unless he had something of unusual importance on his desk."

In another moment all the officers of this mess were standing, the last fragments of their evening meal forgotten, and all eyes turned on the radio station, a quarter of a mile distant.

"There goes General Carleton!" cried Prescott's second lieutenant, Hal Overton, a former soldier promoted from the ranks.

"And only Colonel Weeks with him," added Lieutenant Noll Terry, Holmes's second in command, also a man promoted from the ranks.

General Carleton and his staff officer were riding at a gallop, full testimony to their own belief in the importance of the news that awaited them. Soldiers darted out to take charge of the horses as both officers threw themselves from saddle and ran inside the office at the base of the radio station. General Carleton and his aide were inside not more than three minutes when they came out again, on the run, started their horses and made flying mounts.

"They're heading this way," muttered Captain Follinsbee. Immediately after the general and his staff officer drew up at this little mess, returning the salutes of Follinsbee and his juniors.

"You are right, gentlemen," said General Carleton, "in believing that important news is in the air. The enemy's fleet has been sighted, a hundred and sixty miles nearly due east of

here, and apparently heading for the Massachusetts coast. The enemy transport fleet, well guarded, is reported by our aviators to be forty miles further east. Our fleet is moving up from the southwest to intercept the enemy's battle fleet. Plainly the German invading expedition intends to try to land north of Boston."

Not a man in the little group of officers paled, but a feeling of awe ran through all alike. By the morrow, at the latest, they were destined, unless our fleet destroyed and sank the Germans, to be in touch with an enemy vastly superior in numbers, training and equipment.

"Lieutenant Prescott!" rapped out the commanding general's voice sharply.

"Sir," answered the young soldier, stepping forward.

"The observation airship on which is mounted your long-range camera is on the ground, half a mile due west. As you invented the camera that takes pictures at a distance of several miles, you are to be the one to serve the camera in case the naval engagement is fought during daylight hours. You will report at once. Lieutenant Commander Davis, of the Navy, is in charge of the aircraft, but he will give you every assistance."

"Very good, sir," Prescott responded, saluting gravely though not concealing the flash of

eager delight in his eyes over the detail that had been given him. "I shall need one man, sir, preferably an officer, to aid me in pointing the camera."

At hearing this announcement Bert Howard was not able to control in time the eager start that brought him a step forward, his hands clenched, his eyes glowing.

"An officer, I suppose?" inquired General Carleton. "Take whom you will, if he have the permission of his commanding officer. Lieutenant Commander Davis will be able to advise you as to the selection of some of the exposures. These pictures are to have military and naval value, of course, Lieutenant Prescott; they are intended to be of use to our commanders in other naval battles that may occur."

As Dick turned, his gaze roving swiftly, he caught sight of the eager face of Cadet Captain Howard.

"Would you like to go?" inquired Prescott.

"Above anything else, sir," Bert returned, throbbing at the prospect.

"Can your next in command handle the troop well?"

"As well as I could myself, sir," Bert answered.

"General, will you approve my taking this young cadet officer, sir?" Prescott inquired.

"If you are satisfied with him, it seems to me that it would be an excellent experience for him," was the general's response.

"You may go, then," said Dick, nodding and smiling, and Bert Howard's breath came and went rapidly, as he saluted.

"You will relieve these two officers from duty then, Captain Follinsbee," was General Carleton's next order. Salutes were exchanged. A staff officer, riding furiously, approached, saluted and handed the general a note. Prescott and Bert Howard hastened away.

"If you wish to save time," suggested Captain Bert, "why not use two of the Gridley troop horses? We can take an orderly to lead our horses back."

"Excellent!" Dick agreed, and on a run the Regular and the cadet officer made for the Gridley picket-line. Horses were quickly mounted, and away went the destined aviators, a cadet orderly riding hard in their wake. The observation airship was reached, and in a twinkling Prescott was introducing his companion, while the mounted orderly rode back leading the two horses behind him.

As Bert stepped up on the platform of the airship he was delighted to find it a craft of latest pattern, with engines of a hundred and

eighty horsepower. The platform was both long and broad, built for carrying a good deal of extra weight. There was a wireless outfit aboard, with a soldier operator and his relief, the wireless equipped with microphone for hearing messages above the roar of the machinery. Two naval machinists stood by the engines; there were two jackies to steer the craft in turn, and a marine orderly. While the cadet officer took in these facts, Prescott stepped quickly to a long, covered affair that had the appearance of being a rapid-fire gun of unusual length but small calibre. Dick rapidly removed the rubber covers from this affair and examined it lovingly.

"See here, Howard," Prescott called. "Probably you never looked over anything like this before. This is my camera. The focusing is done through what looks like the gun barrel. The lens is of extremely long focus. At a distance of even three miles a battleship can be focused sharply upon the film. Look through these sights, and you will find that they are magnifying finders, showing what the lens sees.

"This contrivance, which is like a finder, shows the view sharply when the lens is in exact focus. Of course I take small pictures on these films, which are afterwards enlarged for the

official pictures. I can get a good picture at as short a distance as a quarter of a mile, or as far away as three and a half miles. In this box below are three cameras for taking photographs at ordinary ranges."

"I'll try not to get you close enough to need the ordinary cameras," smiled Lieutenant Commander Davis grimly. "Even at a mile this craft would be a fine target for an inch or two-inch shell from the enemy. Are you all ready, Mr. Prescott?"

"Quite ready, Davis," the young Army officer nodded.

Davis gave the order by merely holding up one hand. Bang! Rattle! Burr-rr-rr! Clank, clank! The huge airship was moving forward and rising, the noise of her machinery all but drowning out the cheers that ascended from soldier throats below them.

"If you love America," Dick Prescott shouted gayly, in Bert Howard's ear, "take a look backward now. It may be your last glimpse!"

Before them stretched the sea. The voyagers on this aircraft were heading out to witness the most stupendous, momentous naval battle in which Uncle Sam's fleet had ever been engaged!

CHAPTER II

WHEN THE SHELLS BEGAN TO FLY

AS Bert Howard took a backward glance at the now receding land, he was able to command a view that extended several miles inland. In a flash he had his powerful field glasses at his eyes, focusing them sharply. On the railway tracks he beheld scores of long trains, mostly of freight cars. The highways seemed to be swarming with automobiles and motor trucks. For the first time in his life the cadet had a good idea of the stupendous preparations needed for battle.

“Even if the Germans land, it doesn’t seem possible that they can beat us,” he roared in Prescott’s ear. It looks as if the whole country were turning out to repel an enemy.”

“If the Germans sink or disperse our fleet, and get to shore,” Prescott retorted, “it will be nothing but a massacre for our handfuls of men, Howard. Our forces will die bravely, and they won’t be long about it, either.”

Bert felt fullest respect for the opinions of this capable young West Pointer, yet it was difficult for him to realize that such forces as he saw on shore could be defeated under any conditions.

"It's win at sea, or a massacre for us, and we'll be the victims," Dick added.

In a few minutes more the aircraft had gone so far out to sea that the field glasses were of no further use in studying detail on shore. Bert put his binoculars back in the case hanging at his left side and turned to study the sea.

"See those specks dead ahead?" asked Prescott, handing his own glasses to the cadet half an hour later. Bert looked, and made out what he dimly discerned to be a host of warships scattered over an area of many square miles.

"That's our main fleet," Prescott continued. "It is steaming slowly seaward to intercept the German fleet. Sweep the sky ahead, and you will see a dozen airships scattered among the clouds over a much wider area. It is the duty of those air-scouts to make sure that no German warships succeed in getting by on either flank, unseen by our own forces."

"But there are no enemy warships in sight, heading this way," remarked Bert.

"And may not be all night," broke in Davis, "but nevertheless the watch must be kept up all night. The airships you see miles ahead are only a portion of our airfleet. Other American airships are 'way out at sea, hovering as close as possible to the oncoming German fleet, and at the same time fighting or dodging German

aircraft that are trying to sail over our scout aeroplanes to destroy them."

"It looks like a combination air and yacht cruise," Bert Howard told himself. "I can't imagine this scene in connection with the destruction and bloodshed that are to come. It doesn't seem possible that a nation's fate can be hanging on a bloody tragedy."

The marine orderly, saluting, handed Lieutenant Commander Davis a sheet of paper. The naval officer read it through, then handed it to Prescott and Bert. The wireless message read:

"Aeroplane commanded by Lieutenant Downs, Navy, and carrying three other Navy men, has just collapsed under fire of three German Taubes and plunged into sea. Three American aeroplanes have started in concerted pursuit of the Taubes."

And five minutes later this message came:

"Two of pursuing American aircraft destroyed. One Taube collapsed. Remaining American aircraft escaping by superior speed."

"That is taking place over or just in advance of the German war fleet," Prescott explained.

"And we can see nothing of it, nor even realize it," Howard cried, his face flaming.

By this time the observation aeroplane was nearing the slow-steaming American fleet.

Prescott signed to his cadet companion to stand by the bulb and lever with which the exposure of the camera was to be made. Dick spent some moments peering through his finders and adjusting the focus. Then he stepped quickly aside to afford Davis a good look. The naval officer nodded. At a sign from Dick, Bert Howard made the exposure. Prescott wound up the film and was ready for the next picture. Past different divisions of the fleet the aircraft moved, and many were the pictures made of the formation in which the fleet moved against the coming of an enemy who was still hours away.

"Are we going out to see the German fleet?" Bert inquired.

"No," said Dick; "we can wait. The Germans will be sure not to disappoint us."

Later supper was served—a spiritless affair of sandwiches and hot coffee. Darkness came down over the American fleet. Only signal lights flashed from time to time, or powerful searchlights swept the waters ahead. It was a weird, chilling sight. Somehow, with the coming of dark, Cadet Captain Howard began to feel a sense of coming disaster. Below the airship, as it circled about behind or over the American fleet, were four divisions of four superb dreadnaughts each. There were thirty-two torpedoboat destroyers, half a dozen swift

scout vessels of the Navy and a dozen submarines. To the rear of the fleet were four older armored cruisers. Far out on either flank of the Atlantic fleet moved two of the swift new battle cruisers, barely completed and commissioned.

"It seems as if they ought to sweep the seas of anything that could sail," Bert declared, yet with a suppressed shudder.

"If the other fleet, by any form of reckoning, is even two ships superior to ours, then the chances are against us," Prescott answered.

"Have you any friends in the fleet?"

Bert Howard shook his head.

"Darrin and Dalzell are with our fleet. Both are lieutenants, and each commands a submarine," Dick went on. "They are old schoolmates of mine; both are Gridley boys, you know. I can't help wondering what glory or what fate a few hours may bring them."

"They'll acquit themselves like Americans—and Gridleyites!" Bert declared hopefully.

"They'll take the usual chances, against men at least as good in the enemy's fleet," Dick said soberly.

"Gentlemen, you will do well to lie down and sleep," Davis suggested. "Some of our crew will sleep too. Until daylight I doubt if anything important will happen. I shall be awake

all night, and will see that you are called before day breaks over the waters."

A shelter to protect sleepers from the cold, sharp wind, had been raised. Inside this enclosure Dick and his cadet friend lay down, well wrapped in blankets. A soldier wireless man, one of the jackies, the marine and a machinist lay there with them.

For two hours Bert Howard found that he could not sleep. His thoughts would not let him. Had there been light on the sea below, other than the sweeping flashes of searchlights, he would not have attempted to slumber. At last his eyes closed and sleep came.

"Up, all hands," he heard a voice roar above the unceasing tumult of the machinery. "The fleets are nearing each other, and trouble will begin shortly."

Lieutenant Commander Davis was the speaker. Bert felt disposed to roll over for another nap, but second thought prevailed. Disentangling himself from the blankets, he sprang up, his teeth chattering with the cold as he rubbed his eyes.

Away over in the east the sun had risen, and was well above the horizon. Yet, as Bert tried to gaze at the American fleet, two miles ahead, he saw that darkness still hovered over the gray fighting craft. Then he understood. It

was the elevation of the aircraft that made the sun visible to him while the Atlantic Fleet was still wrapped in night.

But what was that on which the sun shone, off to the east? Bert jerked out his field glasses. Now he knew! It was the German fleet—a collection of specks, steaming through the daylight that was yet denied to the American craft.

For several minutes Bert Howard gazed, fascinated, at the hostile fleet. Counting the specks, he found that the German vessels outnumbered the American. Whatever other superiorities there were on the side of the Teutons the young cadet was to learn later.

A roar of anger sounded at his side. Turning with a start, Howard beheld the face of Davis, inflamed, the naval officer's eyes displaying the angry gleam of one betrayed.

"The enemy has gauged our fleet just as if it had had advance information," stormed Davis, as he alternately gazed through his glasses and wrote in a notebook. "There! I have their battleship list, name by name, for I recognize the class, at least, of each of the German dreadnaughts. Against our sixteen there are twenty-two of the German dreadnaughts. They have five battle cruisers to our two. For our thirty-two destroyers they carry forty-four!"

"But we have the submarines, sir," Bert reminded.

"We have a dozen," snorted Lieutenant Commander Davis. "The Germans have—who shall guess how many? Perhaps fifty! Be assured that they are superior to us. At Key West and Guantanamo we have cruiser and submarine fleets; the rest of our real fighting ships are in the Pacific. For months it has looked as though Japan might have designs against our western coast. All the ships that should be here to meet this real foe are elsewhere. If they were here, with our Atlantic Fleet, we might hope. Yet if we had our whole fleet here—if it had been possible to assemble our Navy in season, the Germans would still have us in a trap, for a larger German fleet would now be steaming toward us! Whatever we had or have for defense, the Germans know our strength and would have a fleet here to outmatch us. For Germany has a powerful Navy, my boy—and *the United States is not prepared to resist a strong foe!*"

"Can't we win, sir?" Bert asked, feeling a strange choking in his throat.

"We can win," retorted Davis bitterly, "if most of our shots land and if most of the German shots miss!"

"Is it as bad as that, sir?" cried Howard.

"To-day's layout on the seas couldn't be much worse!" groaned Lieutenant Commander Davis.

Daylight was slowly lifting over the American fleet. It was now moving at increased speed. A few minutes later Bert, his glasses still to his eyes, made out the reflection of the sun on the fighting tops of the leading battle-ships of Uncle Sam.

"Awaiting orders, sir," Howard shouted at Prescott, who shook his head, making answer:

"Light not yet good enough for me to get clear photographs."

Moving mainly north and south, the observation airship maneuvered to keep some three miles behind the nearest of the American ships. Occasionally the flyer veered enough to eastward to keep up with the advance of the Atlantic Fleet. Other and lighter airships shared the upper air with Davis's craft, for Uncle Sam was making full use of all the aeroplanes he had been able to get together in season. Four of these air scouts now shot ahead, advancing to meet and hover over the oncoming German fighting ships.

"They've gone to give the range to our spotters and range finders," Davis explained. "Plucky fellows, and not all of them may get back to safety."

3—1 *Conquest.*

Bert Howard continued to watch, silent, fascinated with the strange picture spread out before him. The Germans came on, with two battleship divisions side by side, leading, with three more divisions occupying a broader second line. Between the Teutonic dreadnaughts the destroyers swarmed. As to the enemy's submarines, they were there, too, though the periscopes of but few showed at a time; guessing the number of the enemy submarines would be a hopeless task. Five battle cruisers of the enemy were now cutting a wide circle to the left, as if to run around the American right flank. Away out there on the right was one American battle cruiser.

"There they go!" yelled Davis, almost fiercely, pointing with his notebook toward his right.

It was the German battle cruisers that opened, firing a few shots apiece to get the range. Then like hawks, the German battle cruisers closed in upon the one American battle cruiser at the right of the line. The only other battle cruiser of the American fleet was miles away, over at the American left.

After the first range-finding shots, the battle cruisers of the enemy suddenly poured forth a furious fire. Caught in a trap, the American craft moved forward at her best speed, deter-

mined to sell her life dearly. Through a cyclone of huge projectiles the American battle cruiser moved, without suffering vital hits. Indeed, she appeared to bear a charmed life. As she raced forward the American vessel spoke rapidly and continuously through her own guns.

"Hurrah!" quivered Bert Howard, fairly dancing in his joy. "Look at that, sir!"

For the American battle cruiser had selected one of the enemy ships as target, and upon her had rained all the fury of her fourteen-inch guns. A great hole in her starboard bow, one of the German battle cruisers now began to sink, stem foremost. Then, suddenly, through the decks of the stricken enemy ship burst a great column of smoke, and the German craft foundered.

"What do you think now, sir, about the American style of fighting, and of our chances to-day?" were the words that burst gleefully from Howard's lips.

CHAPTER III

THROUGH THE MORNING OF DISASTER

“**W**E have seen only the start of the fighting,” answered Davis mournfully. “That is but skirmishing. The conduct of the opposing battleship fleets must decide the day.”

“Look, sir!” bawled the marine orderly, nudging Davis’s elbow and pointing ahead.

Up to now the German Taubes and other aircraft—in all there were some three dozen of them—had remained to the rear of the German squadrons. But now they came racing forward.

“Get the machine gun ready!” commanded Davis, and the marine sprang to obey, ripping off the covers and feeding in a strip-like belt of cartridges.

Ahead of the German fleet, and out over the American ships raced the Teutonic aircraft. Soon one of them hung a brief instant over the fine dreadnaught “Wyoming,” while a smoke bomb dropped slowly from the enemy aircraft. That smoke bomb gave the exact range to the range finders on the nearest German battleships.

From battleship after battleship of the German fleet burst puffs of smoke, and screaming shells hissed through the air. The range was soon found, and the Kaiser's battleships came one after another into the firing. It was but a matter of moments before the Germans had the range as accurately as could be desired. Then they turned loose with salvos fired about as fast as the various guns could be handled.

"Why don't the American battleships fire?" cried Bert, amazed at the sight of the swiftly moving but silent American main fleet.

"What would be the use?" demanded Lieutenant Commander Davis. "The Germans are barely within striking distance, but our guns are of shorter range. There go two of the 'Wyoming's' guns now—*watch!*"

Bert followed with his eyes the direction indicated by the naval officer. Then he saw two small geysers of water spurt up where the American shells had landed in the water."

"Two miles short of a hit!" yelled Davis bitterly. "Of course! We've known all along—Congress, too—that our guns had two miles less range than the Germans'."

What followed it took Bert Howard some time to understand. First of all, he saw the American battle cruiser out on the right, victor over one German battle cruiser, stagger under

a sudden volcano of enemy shells. Suddenly the American vessel acted like a stricken thing. Her steering gear shot away, she became unmanageable. It was exactly three minutes after that that she began to sink. The cadet captain groaned.

"If our numbers at that point had been even," he all but sobbed, "there would have been a different story to tell!"

"Of course!" snapped Davis. "But Congress, backed by the indifference of our people, has seen to it that we had less of everything than the country that has become our enemy! Look over there, Howard!"

Bert turned, and, as he did so, felt a throb of acute anguish. Patriot that he was, the boy felt an impulse of madness when he saw the "Wyoming" belch smoke like a volcano; then, blown up by a deck-piercing German shell that had reached her magazine, the fine super-dreadnaught began to founder. In three minutes even the tips of her masts were beneath the water.

By this time the American battleship divisions had been forced, for better defense, into a double line the form of an ellipse. The four divisions now minus one of their proudest ships, moved on in their formation, maneuvering to draw closer to the enemy ships.

“There goes our ‘Texas!’ ” roared Davis, as a spurt of water rose at the side of that battleship. “A submarine’s torpedo has struck her at the belt-line. There’s another equally good German torpedo shot! Poor old ‘Texas!’ And Whitford fought her splendidly.”

“Hurrah!” broke jubilantly from Howard’s lips, as he saw an American destroyer dart in just as the submarine that had doomed the “Texas” rose to the surface. A few swift shots from the destroyer’s four-inch guns, and the submarine, her conning tower shot away, sank like a flash, to rise no more.

Now several of the American aircraft hovered low over the broad scene of battle, while men stood on her platforms ready to drop bombs on whatever of the enemy’s submarines could be made out from the air. For from the platform of an aeroplane a submarine under water can be vaguely detected. But with submarine and airship both in action it is not easy to drop bombs that will hit.

Around the American ellipse moved the German fleet, at first out of reach of any American guns. “The “Louisiana,” crippled, drifted astern, while half a dozen enemy submarines darted at her. Within ten minutes, despite valiant help from American destroyers, the “Louisiana” was on her way to the bottom.

All the time the American battleships sought to broaden the ellipse in which they sailed, trying, ever trying, to reach the Germans with their guns. Nor was this effort wholly without success. Two of the older, slower enemy battleships were struck hard, and American submarines finished the mischief, sending these ships and their crews to the bottom.

During this time Lieutenant Dick Prescott had not been unmindful of his work of making all possible photographs of the sea tragedy being enacted below and just ahead. Aided by the advice of Lieutenant Commander Davis he had made several score of exposures on his films, and Bert had stood by to work the bulb and lever at Prescott's order.

After a few minutes during which he was very busy Howard nearly lost track of the fight. When he turned again to watch he discovered that the American battleship fleet of sixteen had been reduced to eleven in actual service. Of the other five one was drifting helplessly, waiting until the daring German submarines should find their chance to finish her. Another battleship showed only her mastheads, and in a twinkling more these were invisible. The other three missing battleships had already gone to the bottom. And now Bert, with the aid of his glass, saw a periscope and the top of a tower

emerge from the water eight hundred yards away from the flagship of one of the German battleship divisions. Before she could fire, however, an enemy destroyer, darting around the stern of the flagship, riddled the plucky American with shells and put him out of existence.

"I hope neither Darrin nor Dalzell commanded that craft," cried Prescott, drawing in his breath. "Though it was a glorious death for fighting men to die!"

Out on the extreme left the surviving American battle cruiser had run away from the fight. Not from cowardice, however, but from design, and by signaled order of the American naval commander. With the battle cruiser went two torpedo boat destroyers, while in advance sped two American aircraft. Their purpose was to escape to the sea beyond, to come up with the German transport fleet conveying her soldiers, and to sink as many of these transports as possible before the enemy warships guarding the transport fleet could bring about the destruction of the battle cruiser and her two small companions.

No sooner had the move been discovered by the Germans than four enemy battle cruisers and a dozen destroyers, accompanied by a half-score of German aircraft, raced after this des-

perate expedition. An hour later the remaining American battle cruiser and the two destroyers were sent to the bottom, while one of the American airships was able to return, but the other had collapsed and her crew had found graves in the ocean.

"Fighting on land is bad enough, but this is ghastly beyond the power to imagine," groaned Dick Prescott.

"I could endure it," retorted Bert Howard, "if only I might see our fleet winning in the end."

But the battle went steadily against Uncle Sam's gallant but insufficient forces. Much of what followed Bert Howard cannot remember clearly to this day. He was too heartsick, too angry over the stupid indifference of the American people which had made this day's series of disasters inevitable.

Two-thirds of the American fleet had vanished from the face of the waters when a new peril arose—one that menaced the American aviators. For now the swarming German aviators, released from the need of aiding in range fighting, made a determined onslaught on the surviving American aircraft.

Up to this time the observation airship, her mission apparently plain to the enemy, had not been much annoyed. A few missiles from

enemy airships had whistled by her, but no direct or prolonged attack upon her had been made. But now one of the lightest, swiftest of the German aeroplanes rose to a height of a thousand feet above the craft commanded by Davis. Her purpose was at once plain to the naval officer.

"That fellow is going to riddle us from overhead," he explained to Prescott and Howard. "Naturally, we shall endeavor to frustrate his plans."

Kneeling behind the steersman, Davis shouted his orders for the handling of the aeroplane. His orders to the machinists he sent by hand signals. Prescott and the marine handled the machine gun, firing whenever opportunity presented, which was when the big observation craft, by virtue of her powerful engines and great speed, succeeded in drawing well away.

Two other German aircraft joined in the attempt. Missiles began to heat the air around Davis's craft. It did not seem possible that Davis and his companions could much longer survive.

For ten minutes this game continued. By a lucky shot Prescott succeeded in hitting one of the annoyers, and that enemy craft turned and plunged to the sea. But three others turned and flew to take her place in the upper sky.

From the direction of the far-away Massachusetts coast came a speck, gradually growing until it could be made out as a trim, swift bi-plane of latest type and of immense speed. While the struggle in the air continued this stranger came nearer and nearer. Suddenly, from halyards under her platform broke the folds of an American flag.

"An omen, I hope," panted Bert Howard, watching with an interest as natural as it was keen. The alert Germans scented in this newcomer a foe of no mean mettle, for two of them flew away to meet her, trying to rise above the unknown American with a view to dropping shots upon her. It was a game that the flag-flaunting newcomer could play better. Almost vertically she shot up into the air, while from the edge of her platform two men could be seen depressing the muzzle of her one gun in the effort to draw a bead upon one of the German assailants.

Puff after puff of smoke could be seen as the machine guns of the adversaries were discharged, yet it seemed a strange fight, for even in the brief lulls when no cannon shot could be heard from the combatants on the sea below, the noise of the machine guns in the air could not be heard above the engine noises of the warring aircraft.

"Those American chaps, whoever they are," observed Prescott's strained voice in Bert's ear, "are surely dandies at their game. Look at that!"

For one of the German aircraft was already plunging toward the waiting ocean, and now another was wrecked and driven headlong by the furious, accurate fire of the flag-flaunting Americans.

"If we had enough aircraft handled with such vim, we could soon pluck out the eyes of the German fleet," muttered Lieutenant Commander Davis savagely. "And it is the fault of a stupid nation that we are not able to have an air fleet of hundreds of craft out here to-day."

"I miss two battleships," declared Bert, as soon as the new American biplane had driven off the assailants.

"Surely you miss 'em," retorted Davis, "and the country will miss them, for they have gone to the bottom in the last ten minutes."

And now the observers up in the air were called upon to notice another strange and depressing incident. The battleship "North Carolina," crippled and useless, as far as her gunfire went, but with her steam still left, was signaled by Admiral Greely to leave the fight and seek safety. Reluctantly Captain Sims, of

the crippled battleship, brought his once proud fighter around and headed away at full speed, while the jackies on her decks stood with down-cast eyes. But the escape was not to be. A dreadnaught, two destroyers and a submarine detached themselves from the German battle line and gave pursuit. Within a few minutes the "North Carolina" had been brought to a standstill; five minutes later the submarine, with one well-directed torpedo, finished that crippled member of our fleet. Twelve hundred officers and men went to the bottom with her.

It was a hideous morning for the smaller, inferior American fleet. Disasters followed and multiplied. At last, realizing that further fighting was useless, Admiral Greely caused to be broken out from the masthead of his flagship the signal to scatter and to retreat under full steam. Even that looked like a hopeless maneuver. Though the surviving American ships fled they used their full complement of guns that would fire astern.

A moment later the American aircraft, now reduced by the loss of five, read a signal that ordered them to escape if possible and not to remain longer with a fleet that was past the point of being served.

"It's the end," announced Lieutenant Commander Davis, as he gave the order to the pilot

of the observation airship. "Prescott, you have your photographs, but the sight of most of them will be enough to drive any American crazy. Two hundred million dollars more, spent by Congress in season, would have saved us from this defeat, and it would be the enemy's fleet that would be headed for the bottom to-day. We're whipped, and there's no hope for it."

Immediately a swarm of German aeroplanes came rushing after the American aircraft, to pounce upon them once more. But the unknown, flag-flaunting American again appeared at close quarters. It was just in time, too, for three German machine guns were sending a veritable tornado of missiles at the observation craft. Davis ordered every one aboard except the pilot to lie down flat, and did so himself. Bullets went by in sheets, leaving it only a question of moments when the huge observation craft must collapse and pitch into the sea, leaving her crew and passengers to drown. But the machine gun above the flying flag again did the best work that was done in the air, and soon the pursuers of Davis's craft swerved off—all except one enemy biplane that crumpled, and, with broken planes, plunged to the sea beneath.

Two men behind the machine gun on the unknown waved their caps frantically as they

drove their craft as near as was safe. Unslung his field glasses, Prescott took a quick look, then fairly bellowed:

“Good old chums! They’re Tom Reade and Harry Hazelton, Howard! Two Gridley fellows, as you surely know. They’re made of the best old Gridley mettle. A year ago I knew that they, though civil engineers, were interested in aviation work. So it was for this that they fitted themselves. I wish they had wireless aboard; I’d talk with them.”

Glancing down at the sea to discover how the retreat was faring, those on the observation craft felt ill indeed. The retreat was developing into a slaughter. The German commanders still, where possible, did all the harm they could to the American fleet without bringing their vessels within the lesser range of the American warships.

“There won’t be enough of our Navy left to-day to convert into a ferryboat!” cried Prescott, gnashing his teeth.

But Lieutenant Commander Davis, more skilled in reading the signs of the weather, flourished his marine glass toward the north.

“Look!” he shouted joyously. “Do you see?”

Lieutenant Prescott shook his head.

“Thick weather coming down upon us,” ex-

plained the naval officer. "Within fifteen minutes fog will cover this whole scene. It may be an offering of divine providence in order that at least a few American naval lives may be spared."

Within ten minutes as it turned out, the rolling fog had enveloped all the area of that awful sea tragedy. This was the first sign of any chance that the surviving American ships had had to escape sinking.

"That's odd, sir," said the wireless operator, after having beckoned Davis to him. "There is a number that I hear going through the air. It has been repeated several times; just the numeral, '29,' and nothing more, sir."

Later on those who had witnessed this forenoon's fearful work were destined to know what "29" meant, but there could be no explanation of it for months to come.

"There is nothing more we can do out here, and our orders are to return to land," Davis announced. "We can make good speed, and we'll make the most of it. In time for late luncheon, Prescott, I'll have you back with your own men."

And that word was kept. On the way back few words were spoken. After what had been witnessed this morning real Americans were not likely to have much to say. Their hearts

4—1 *Conquest.*

were full to the bursting point; words seemed worse than useless.

At last Dick and Bert Howard were landed within a mile of their own trenches. By wireless the news had proceeded them, so few near the trenches asked them questions.

Yet through the country, as the news was flashed and read, Americans were at first inclined to regard the news as a sheer hoax. It seemed incredible that Americans could be beaten in war.

Later the terrible news was driven home upon the people. There was anger everywhere, and voters loudly declared that Congress had betrayed the country in not providing ample defenses early enough in peace times. In truth, Congress had betrayed the country, and in this in the face of ample warnings extending over many years before. But were the people themselves guiltless of the defeat, and of the killing of thousands of brave officers at sea? The people had gone on electing and re-electing these same useless congressmen!

"But the Army will save us!" was heard on every hand. "We have lost a great naval battle, but we shall win hereafter!"

CHAPTER IV.

SERVING IN THE SHORE TRENCHES

DURING the night that followed, and after the fog had cleared, air scouts brought in word that the German naval and transport fleet was approaching at cruising speed. The enemy could easily be close to the coast by daylight.

After he lay down behind the trench Cadet Captain Bert Howard could not sleep. When he did the horrors he had witnessed intruded in chaotic succession into his troubled dreams.

Captain Follinsbee, as battalion commander, had appointed an officer of the day for the battalion, and Howard, his two lieutenants, Joe Wright and Ned Burnham, were free of duty unless an alarm was sounded. Only six of the boys from the Gridley cadet troop had been detailed to guard duty. To the right of Follinsbee's men lay a Regular regiment; on the left was a militia regiment. Elsewhere, within close communication, lay thousands of other men in American uniforms, sleeping on their rifles. The scene was one that would have filled the average American with a sense of the safety of his country.

At daylight Bert, completely worn out, was at last sound asleep. Then loud musical notes jangled upon his ears. He dreamed that some hopeless amateur was taking lessons on a too-sharp cornet.

"That's first call to reveille," explained Joe Wright, bending over and lightly shaking his captain. "Are you going to sleep all day, with the enemy in sight?"

"In sight?" repeated Bert, waking in an instant and scrambling to his feet.

"Look yonder," laughed Cadet Lieutenant Wright. "You won't see much off over the sea, but I'm told that the things sticking up over the water at the horizon are the mastheads of the German warships."

Bert gazed, and could well believe it. After all, why should the Germans, having dispersed the American fleet, remain longer at sea when the United States constituted their goal? Besides, nearer at hand, American air craft were flying about, while in the distance appeared other airships, plainly reconnoitering for the enemy.

"We ought to be under fire within less than two hours, I'm told," Joe Wright went on merrily. "Captain, at last we're going to get some of what we've been training for during the last three or four years!"

"I hope you'll like it when you get it," smiled Bert quizzically, "but I'm afraid you won't."

Ned Burnham, standing nearby, heard and laughed, rather boisterously, in truth, as though the laugh released a portion of his pent-up nervousness over what he now realized was in store for him this day.

Up and down the trench of the Gridley boys there were scores of these youngsters looking and talking, laughing a good deal also.

"Mr. Wright! Mr. Burnham!" spoke Bert crisply. "Be good enough to instruct the sergeants to see to it that breakfast is prepared without delay. Even the best troops—such as come from Gridley—fight better after they've been fed."

At the order the Gridley boys sprang out of their trench, running to the small stores of firewood gathered the afternoon before. Small faggot fires were soon blazing, and on top of these fires, fed from time to time with splinters of wood, coffee was set to boil. Each trooper prepared his coffee in the same way, by dropping into a pint agate cup a handful of coffee beans. This was ground coarsely with the butts of cavalry revolvers, and then cold water was poured until the cup was all but filled. Each cup was then set over a fire. When the coffee had boiled the cup was removed, and a dash of cold

water thrown in from a canteen, to settle the grounds. Then sugar was added and stirred, and the coffee set aside to cool. Over the same embers a few slices of bacon were cooked and by the time this was ready each trooper addressed himself to a meal of coffee, hard tack and bacon.

But before the coffee had been well started Follinsbee's battalion came out of its trenches and similar preparations were begun.

"Smart youngsters!" called Lieutenant Dick Prescott heartily, as he strode over for a moment. "Trying to beat the Regulars, eh? Well, perhaps we *are* a sleepy lot."

"If your Regulars are a sleepy lot, history has somehow lost sight of the fact," responded Captain Bert Howard gravely.

"Lieutenant Prescott," spoke up Ned Burnham, "how soon do you think we are likely to be swapping shots with the Germans?"

"Can't tell you," rejoined Prescott, a twinkle in his eyes. "The time table rests with the enemy commanders out yonder, and I haven't seen any of them this morning."

Loud laughter from a lot of the Gridley troopers greeted that sally. Bert surveyed his men covertly, and with some concern. He knew that untried troops had often become panic-stricken against a veteran foe, and he wondered

if his Gridley boys, by their laughter, were betraying an amount of nervousness that would cause them to flee later.

Lieutenant Greg Holmes next sauntered over and joined in talking with the youthful Gridley officers, leaving their second lieutenants, Terry and Overton, in charge of their respective companies. Later, breakfast brought by their soldier strikers was laid before the two young Regular officers.

Every now and then this little group of five glanced seaward. Some time passed before the mastheads looked larger and nearer. The enemy hulls were still out of sight.

"I wonder if the Germans will deliver a frontal attack when they land, or land higher up or down the coast," remarked Lieutenant Holmes.

"It will make little difference to us," answered Prescott. "Wherever they land between here and Boston we have other trenches to occupy. No matter where the fight starts, they'll still have to attack us from in front."

"Of course we won't hold these trenches long," pursued Holmes.

"Why not?" Bert ventured to ask.

"Because the enemy can shell us out of this neighborhood before they land a man."

At that Joe Wright looked solemn. Burn-

ham tried to laugh, but his mirth was not successful.

"Shells from the enemy are not so bad," Greg Holmes went on dryly.

"No?" queried Bert, opening his eyes wide.

"Not when you get used to 'em," answered Greg solemnly.

"Oh, I see," smiled Wright. "By the time you get used to 'em nothing matters much; you're dead by that time."

"Sometimes shells do a lot of mischief," Prescott stated, "and sometimes they don't hit much of anything in a way destructive to life. But we're not expected to hold these trenches long; they are not built in bomb-proof fashion."

By the time that the meal was over the hulls of the leading German warships were in plain sight from the trenches. Bert Howard, as he gazed at the grim monsters whose work he had witnessed the day before, felt an odd little thrill pass through him. He wondered if he were going to be afraid in the fighting to come.

"All officers and men will finish their breakfasts within the next three minutes," called a staff officer, riding at a trot behind the line of trenches. "Five minutes after breakfast company officers will inspect all equipment of their men."

"The inspection isn't needed," explained

Prescott in an undertone. "It is merely to have something to take up the attention of the men, so they won't have time to spend in nervous forebodings."

That proved to be the true explanation, for, after inspection, drills were ordered. Bert's troop was ordered to drill in saddle.

"More snap, men!" shouted Captain Howard, after the cavalry drill had proceeded for five minutes. "Remember, you're under the eyes of the Regulars. Now—snap and team work."

The Gridley spirit carried the boys through after that. The drill was the most successful one that Bert had ever directed.

Before drill was ended Joe Wright glanced seaward. He saw that the leading division of German battleships were no longer heading in toward shore. Instead, they were moving under mere headway, their hulls invisible from the beach, though in sight from the low hilltops beyond. From his post Joe saw a puff and a flash from the sides of one of the enemy dreadnaughts. He understood.

"Look out!" yelled Wright.

"Lieutenant, what is the matter?" demanded Bert Howard, turning to his lieutenant.

"The Germans have commenced shelling us," replied Wright.

At that instant an eight-inch shell landed on the shore a quarter of a mile below. It threw up a cloud of dust as it exploded. The young troopers gazed curiously.

"Joe, you're serving as an officer to-day, and I believe you're fitted to, if you keep your head," said Howard, in a low, stern undertone. "But you'll disgrace the troop and your native town if you give way to astonishment or emotion in that way again. You came here to fight. Now be a man and an American, and take your medicine."

"Thank you," returned Joe, his face flushing. "I deserved it, but you won't have occasion to say anything of the sort to me again."

"I know it," answered Bert briefly, then turned to his troop, which stood halted in platoon front and in extended order.

Suddenly some three dozen shells screamed through the air at the same instant. All landed, exploded, and threw their fragments about over wide areas. One exploded several yards away from the left flank of the troop. From one saddle Tom Callant reeled and fell.

"Steady, men!" ordered Bert, and rode to the spot in time to find one of the sergeants bending over the stricken one.

"How badly is he hit?" asked Howard.

"Killed, sir," replied the youthful sergeant,

in a voice that was nearly steady. Callant was an only son, and one of the best-liked fellows in Gridley High School.

"If the shell had struck nearer there would have been several hit," Bert went on. He was about to order two troopers to carry the dead body a mile to the rear when the bugles rang out for the assembling of all troops at the trenches.

"We can't have any excitement, men," called Captain Bert, riding to the center of his line. "I am going to take you to the trenches. Ride and obey all commands as if you were at drill. Let every movement be executed with precision. Be at your best to-day."

Then the bugle sounded for the troops to move ~~at a~~ trot. Some two hundred yards behind the trench line was a low hollow in which Bert ordered the horses picketed. Then, on foot, he marched his men to the trench.

"Captain Howard," called Prescott, "your command will line on the ground behind the trench. Do not enter it until the order comes."

The Regulars were themselves disposed on the ground behind the trench, and Bert's troopers took up a like position.

For ten minutes the bombardment proceeded briskly. Several of the Regulars were hit and two of Bert's youthful soldiers were slightly

wounded by flying fragments, though neither was hurt enough to leave the line.

"I know that we have heavy artillery masked at the rear," Bert said, when Prescott strolled over to observe the Gridley cadets under shell fire. "May I ask why our artillery doesn't answer the fire?"

"Our guns won't reach the enemy ships at the present range," Prescott replied simply. "It's the same old story. Nearly every country on earth has artillery that will shoot farther than ours will. There may be another reason. It may be that General Carleton doesn't care to let the enemy see that he has heavy artillery at this point."

"Why not?"

"Because, if we have only field guns, the Germans will land at this point, and it is here that General Carleton would prefer to have them land. He is prepared for the enemy here. So far, you will note that none of the enemy aircraft have flown over our heads. Our own fighting aircraft have been able to keep them back."

"Have you seen your friends, Reade and Hazelton?"

"No; I can't find where they are on duty now, and I couldn't leave my company to inquire."

Soon the fire became brisker, but, as the sol-

diers were as safe flat on the ground as they would be in the trenches, and were far less cramped, they were allowed to remain where they were.

The fire became increasingly brisk. Shells raked up and down the trenches as the German battleship division moved in nearer. Still the masked American guns did not attempt to reply. Hospital men rushed up with stretchers, carrying away the dead and wounded. The Gridley boys looked at one another, smiling in sickly fashion.

"Lieutenant Burnham is hit, sir," cried a breathless young trooper, rushing up.

Without a word Bert Howard leaped to his feet, running down the line. He found Ned lying on the ground, in a pool of blood, while two youthful troopers hurriedly undid their first-aid bandages to apply. There could be no mistaking the seriousness of the wound. Ned's left arm was all but torn away from the shoulder.

"I suppose I shall have to be sent back for a rest and treatment," cried Ned, furious with pain and rage. "It's nasty, Captain, to have to be sent to the rear before I've had even a taste of the fighting."

"I should say you've had a pretty big *bite* of fighting, old chap," replied Bert softly, as he bent down and laid a hand on Ned's forehead.

"Here, Patterson, let me apply that bandage."

Using the water in his own canteen, Bert washed the frightful wound as best he could, then quickly applied, one after another, three bandages. Yet all three were not enough to stop the flow of blood, even after a rough tourniquet of rope had been applied above the severed arteries.

"Hospital men!" shouted Bert, as he saw two stretcher bearers pass in the rear. The two men came over at a fast run, looked at Ned for an instant, then gently laid him on the stretcher and bore him swiftly away.

"Good-bye, fellows," Ned called back. "I'll be back with you in a fortnight."

"And he will, if pluck counts," Joe Wright declared huskily.

"Joe, don't you understand?" Bert asked. "There are ten chances to one that Ned will bleed to death through the severed arteries."

"Poor old Ned!" quivered Wright. "And he has been looking forward so intensely to fighting for his country."

"He fought," retorted Bert briefly. "He was ready, and he was hit on the firing line."

A new shrieking filled the air. A dozen more German ships had entered the line, and now the bombardment became trebly more fierce than before.

"To your station, Joe," Bert ordered. "Do all you can to keep our fellows steady. Be on the alert for every order!"

CHAPTER V.

AT GRIPS WITH THE INVADERS

AN hour later the boys from Gridley, together with all the troops over some eight miles along the shore had had their first baptism of fire in earnest.

During that time the German warships had moved in ever closer, still raking the shore and the rising land back of it with their shells. By this time, along the eight-mile stretch, five men in a hundred of all the troops had either been killed or more or less severely wounded.

So far the warships had acted as a good deal of a screen, though behind them it had been possible for the Americans to descry the hovering transports carrying the enemy's troops.

At the end of the hour the fire from the warships had gradually slackened. Now, suddenly, it came again, with increased fury, while almost immediately afterward there had appeared around the sterns of the transports naval launches each towing a string of six lifeboats,

each containing fifty German soldiers. The dash, to land the enemy army, had begun.

"Into the trenches!" traveled the order down the line. Into the ditches leaped thousands of American troops. Boom! boom! boom! The masked American batteries of five-inch guns and howitzers now sprang into action. The radio station, an excellent point from which to compute firing ranges, had been wrecked early in the bombardment, but several skeletonized, portable iron towers had just been rushed up into the air, and from the tops of these American officers calculated and signaled the ranges along with direction. Several field batteries, hitherto invisible from the sea, were now rushed up into position, and these added to the attack upon the landing boats. Before the launches had received signals to return to cover, and had been able to do so, more than fifty landing boats were hit and sunk. Though the Germans saved as many of their men as they could, at least a thousand German officers and soldiers were drowned.

From the American trenches went up cheers that would have been heard on the enemy vessels had it not been for the fury of the cannonading. One field gun after another was hit and put out of commission by German shells, until at last the lighter, visible batteries were out of

action. It was a longer, more difficult task to put the masked batteries of larger pieces out of business. Before this had been accomplished the launch-towed strings of lifeboats again came into view. A few more were sunk, but the rest reached shallow water, German soldiers leaping into the surf and wading ashore.

"Fire steadily when the command comes, men," roared Captain Follinsbee. "Don't waste cartridges, but try to do sharpshooting. Keep as tightly under cover as you can."

Non-commissioned officers, bending low and running, carried these orders to company commanders. When the bugle sounded the order to begin firing at will the notes were heard by only a few soldiers, who immediately obeyed. The order was transmitted to squad leaders throughout the rest of that battalion by the arm-signals of officers.

Magazines thrown open, the firing began. The Germans at the shore fired with a will. For a moment Cadet Captain Bert Howard felt dizzy. Fighting off the sensation, he wheeled to observe carefully the aim of his young men. Many of them, in their excitement, were firing too high. Uttering an exclamation of disappointment, Bert made his way down the trench.

"Aim lower," shouted the young captain. "Get an individual enemy through both sights

5—1 *Conquest.*

before you fire. Don't aim higher than the waist line. Straight firing is better than fast firing. Don't waste cartridges!"

When Bert had made that sink in, then Germany began to hear from Gridley.

R-r-r-rip! The first of the German machine guns to be set up now went into action, hurling gusts of bullets at the trenches. But the Americans, too, possessed machine guns, and these, also, began to sputter angrily. Had not more German troops reached shore at this juncture, those already on land would have been driven back into the water.

"Cease firing! Lie down!" was the order that traveled along the American line as the harassed German soldiers were seen to throw themselves flat on the beach. With that the American fire ceased. For just such a case General Carleton had given orders that Americans were not to use infantry fire save when the Germans attempted to advance.

"Into the trench and lie low, Lieutenant!" ordered Bert, running up to his second in command.

Though the recumbent Germans still fired, they soon ceased, as loath to throw away ammunition as were the Americans. Yet this waiting, without firing, merely gave the Germans time to get reinforcements from the trans-

port fleet. A few field guns that had escaped destruction opened fire on the prostrate enemy, the American machine guns following.

"Fire slowly, by volleys," was the command.

"Troop ready, load!" shouted Captain Bert.

"Rise, aim—fire! Lie down!"

The noise was so great these commands had to be given by hand signals, to be repeated by squad leaders. Despite the sharp work of the few field guns, other long lines of troop-laden boats reached the beach, and many thousands more Germans reached the shore. Bert and Joe now crouched behind the middle of their long, thin troop line.

"They're forming! Here they come!" muttered Joe Wright.

After a furious concert by the German machine guns, the Germans charged up the short slope, coming by rushes, firing every time they knelt or lay down. As often as they halted the German warships poured in their storm of destruction.

Rising enough to sight their pieces, the Americans fired back at will. Despite the work of the enemy's warships' guns Germans were falling at the rate of three to every American.

"The Germans have found one game they can't play!" shouted Bert exultantly to Wright. Yet in that the cadet captain was wrong. When

the Germans were ready they opened with machine gun and infantry fire until sheer weight of missiles forced the American soldiers down behind the walls of their trenches. Thus more ground was gained.

Again the furious bombardment reopened from the warships. Launches landed field guns and small field howitzers, and these were at once employed at short range. The leading German lines were now not more than six hundred yards from the trenches.

Now, by order of the brigade commander, General Smith, a signal in code was wig-wagged down the American line. The Germans were preparing to assault, and the Americans were too much outnumbered.

The first wig-wagged signal was speedily followed by another. Unnoticed, Dick Prescott had left his own company of Regulars, and was now at Bert's side.

"Watch until our battalion starts, Captain Howard," Prescott ordered. "Then lead your troop in retreat, halting and firing as we do."

"Very good, sir," Howard replied, saluting.

Prescott, watching for a third signal, soon added:

"Send back one man in every four now to secure your horses and ride a mile to the rear with them."

Hardly had the troop horses been started to the rear when the bugles sounded the order to retreat. Bert's own troop bugler caught up the order. Firing a last, crashing volley at the Germans, the Gridley boys rose and fled. Yet they halted, almost as one man, five hundred yards up the slope, and fired three volleys kneeling. Then again they rushed away from the enemy, to tumble almost headlong into a second trench a thousand yards from the line they had abandoned. Captain Bert glowed with joy when he saw how well his youngsters had behaved. The troop now had a casualty list of one officer and four men killed, and nine so badly wounded that they had been rushed to the rear by hospital men. Many were the lesser wounds that other Gridley boys had bandaged in order to remain in line and fight.

So galling was the American fire that the Germans were glad to halt and reform in the abandoned first line of trenches. Fatal move! Suddenly, a succession of sparks was sent along buried wires from some controlling hand. Two lines of continuous trench blew up, hurling dirt and stones high into the air. For that American first line had been mined and connected with electric wires for just such a purpose. In that blowing up of the trenches five hundred German soldiers lost their lives, while fully two

thousand more were so badly wounded as to be put out of the fighting.

Though this came as a surprise to the American rank and file, our soldiers were not slow in sending up a taunting, derisive cheer. Yet though they had lost heavily, in a way calculated to deprive fighting men of their nerve, the surviving Germans, thousands strong, left the trenches, rushing forward and once more throwing themselves flat on the ground.

American infantry fire, backed by the machine guns, now raked the ground as though with a fine-tooth comb. Our American soldiers were well protected in their trenches, while they had the enemy in the open.

"This won't be as easy a game as the enemy had with our fleet yesterday," panted Bert.

"Who can say?" asked Prescott gravely. "My boy, the day is not yet over."

It was not long before the present German plan became apparent. The enemy artillery, well posted, continued to pour a rain of shells upon the Americans, while to this storm of death the few surviving American field guns were able to offer only slight response. The heavier five-inch guns were already temporarily out of action while being dragged back to a new point from which they could be employed.

For two hours the Germans ahead managed to keep up a fire that galled. Every minute of that time was used to the best advantage, a continuous procession of lifeboats landing swarms of the gray-clad soldiers of the enemy. By ten in the morning the enemy had a hundred thousand men on shore to cope with the less than thirty thousand American soldiers who now survived in fighting condition.

Moreover, the delivery of more ammunition to the American firing line had been seriously crippled through the shooting of a large percentage of the drivers of the motor cars in which the ammunition was conveyed.

"Aren't we holding our line well, sir?" asked Bert finally. "The enemy hasn't yet driven us out of our second line of trenches."

"The enemy will, when ready," was Prescott's grim retort. "Our men are fighting like fiends, but they are being overwhelmed by a superior number of equally good soldiers. Look there! Get busy with your fire, Captain!"

For now the Germans, made bold by numbers, and determined to drive their adversaries, were gathering in their famous mass formation, with scant intervals between the columns along the fighting front. In this order they came forward at the double quick.

It was a magnificent form of attack, even though destined to be costly in German lives. Instantly the few American field pieces fired into these compact masses, taking heavy toll. American machine guns thinned the tightly packed masses, while Uncle Sam's infantry fire cut furrows through the columns. Yet the Germans came on, bayonets fixed for combat at close quarters.

Had the American private soldier had his way, he would have voted to remain in the trench and receive this attack. But our officers saw the danger of lingering in the face of a decidedly superior foe. These long, closely packed masses, once through the American line at points, would have cut off detachments of Uncle Sam's fighters from their fellows.

Though the German commander was paying dearly in the lives of his countrymen, the masses swept onward. A volunteer regiment, made up of some of the finest men in Massachusetts, yet poorly trained, broke and fled before the Germans reached them. The next unit on the left, the student regiment from Harvard University, excellently trained, spread out, trying to cover the front belonging to both regiments.

At this moment came the bugled orders for the retreat. The few field guns had already

been rushed to the rear. The fleeing volunteer regiment, finding the American brigades rushing after them, redoubled their own frantic, fear-spurred efforts to get away. But there was this difference—American Regulars, militiamen, cadets and other volunteers halted at the order when the third line of trenches was gained, and wheeled about to receive the enemy. The Germans had now halted, but were likely soon to advance once more.

From the northward American troops that had already been put in retreat arrived in time to prevent their being cut off entirely by the foe. So far there was no sign, with the one exception noted, of the American troops becoming panic-stricken and bolting from the control of their officers.

Yet how long would the present good discipline last? How much longer would Uncle Sam's soldiers be able to hold the enemy back for even half an hour at a time.

CHAPTER VI

ORDERED TO UNKNOWN DUTY

THERE followed half an hour's lull, with only intermittent pot-shooting by the enemy, while the American soldiers, careful lest they run out of ammunition, fired no more than was barely necessary. Prescott had come back to the Gridley troop.

"The enemy is giving us a rest," he remarked.

"But surely for purposes of their own, not out of consideration for us," grimaced Bert. "I've been thinking about that volunteer regiment that ran away."

"They've been stopped," Prescott announced. "They were overtaken, halted and driven back to the line. Their brigade commander has stationed a company of Regulars in their rear, with orders to fire upon them briskly if they again attempt to run without orders. That regiment wouldn't have skeedad-dled if it had been trained as thoroughly as your troop, Howard. Your boys are standing it splendidly, but I expected that of Gridley. What are your losses?"

"Eight killed, and seventeen wounded. Poor Burnham! The hospital men told me he died

before the surgeons could get to him. A fine fellow; knew his work and wanted to do it."

"My company has had six men killed and twenty-one wounded," Prescott went on. "The men are grumbling that they haven't been badly enough punished to run away, even by order. Some of them do not understand that once in a while unvanquished troops have to retreat in order to keep themselves from being cut off from the rest of the Army."

Boom! The firing of a German signal gun it proved to be, for now several hundred field guns opened a frightful fire, sweeping the ground near the trenches, throwing up dirt, blinding some of the Americans and wounding or killing with fearful ferocity. Making his way quickly through the trenches Prescott returned to his own company.

For an hour this new bombardment lasted. The few American field guns replied, though there were so few of these guns that their work did not count for much against so numerous an enemy.

"A lot of our fellows want to dig deeper into the trench, and to throw up the dirt in front of the trench for greater protection," Joe Wright spoke.

"Don't let them do it," rejoined Bert sternly. "A raised trench front merely makes a plainer

mark for the enemy to sight on. Make our men keep their heads behind the trench walls. It is all they can do to protect themselves."

"I wonder if we're going to be allowed to hold the trench long?" Joe Wright continued.

"I don't know General Carleton's plans or projects, and I don't know what the Germans may have in store for us," Bert answered grimly.

"So far we've been about ready to move or shift when the Germans told us to do it," Joe remarked sadly.

"That is because the Germans are better prepared and more numerous. They have better artillery and three or four times as many soldiers. We might have had all these things, too, if the Americans hadn't been peace-drunk, stupid with the mania of defenselessness and possessed of the idea that business is better than war—as if business could hope always to thrive in a country that can't protect itself."

"I don't care what happens," muttered Joe, "if only we can keep the enemy from capturing Boston."

"If you expect our army to save Boston, you are surely modest in your wishes," laughed Bert bitterly.

"Don't you believe it can be done?" challenged Joe.

"I don't know, Joe. You and I are not expected to do much thinking, especially on larger questions. Our job, here, is to receive and obey orders."

There had been a few moments' lull in the furious bombardment. Now, without a cheer, great masses of German infantry were thrown forward. R-r-r-rip! Cr-r-r-rackle! Along a front of several miles the American machine guns joined busily in the war game. Thousands of American rifles took up the chorus, the men firing slowly, though at will, and as they took fair sights. Boom! boom! The few American field pieces threw shells at the feet of the advancing enemy. Though the American forces were small by comparison, the accuracy of their fire was inspiring. German soldiers fell like stalks of wheat going down before the reaper. Yet on they came, doggedly, silently, save for the fire of their rifles. It was magnificent, costly courage that the enemy displayed! Wherever gaps were cut in their ranks these were swiftly closed, leaving ranks of dead and wounded behind them as they moved stubbornly forward.

At last the invaders reached an average distance of a hundred and fifty yards from the American trenches. Now our fire became heavier than ever, machine guns, especially, ex-

acting their heavy toll. Gray-clad soldiers died, or fell and bled, until it seemed as if a few minutes more of this fury must wipe out the invaders. They were kneeling, now, firing back at the khaki-clad soldiers of Uncle Sam. The Germans were still so numerous, however, that it seemed certain that a sudden charge by them would result in the capture of the American trenches and the destruction of all the American combatants.

Then there came a lull in the firing. It lasted only a few seconds, but it was as if some hidden hand had stayed the fighters. Then the tumult broke forth again, the Americans firing faster than ever. Over all the din there came faintly to American ears the real tumult of blaring bugles. Did it mean that the Germans were to rush into the final assault? But no! The invaders fired heavily, then turned and fled two hundred yards, kneeling and firing again, then once more retreating. The German assault by superior force had been broken!

At what cost, though? The American trenches seemed full of the dead, dying and injured! There was far more work cut out for the hospital men than they could perform. And Captain Bert Howard's Gridley cadets had suffered as heavily as any other organization.

Not half a minute after the invaders had regained their former position did the numerous batteries of the enemy re-open fire, raining down shells upon the trenches with nearly unerring aim. The list of American casualties was growing with frightful speed!

Just behind the trenches occupied by Follinsbee's small command there was low ground on to which several scores of motor ambulances, automobiles and motor trucks were run at high speed. This shortened the distance that the hospital men had to travel with the grisly burdens on their stretchers. No attempt was made to carry back the dead, who were merely rolled out of the trenches and left lying on the ground. Nor did those whom the surgeons believed to be dying receive a chance to go to hospital. There was opportunity only to pick out the wounded soldiers who bade fair to recover with proper attention. These were lifted on to the stretchers and hustled away to the waiting motor vehicles, on which they were carried miles to the rear for surgical attention. It was a piteous scene, and seemed inhuman to the dying, but the needs were desperate and the necessities of war had to be observed.

A staff officer, dismounting some distance to the rear of the trench, and bending low as he ran forward, threw himself flat on the ground

behind the trench as he hurled a question at Prescott, who pointed down the line at the Gridley position. Bending low as he raced, the staff officer approached Bert.

"Captain Howard!" he roared.

"Here, sir!" bellowed Bert, leaping from his kneeling position and bounding over to the side of the officer.

"Captain, do you see that church spire yonder—some two miles from here?"

"Yes, sir," the Gridley boy acknowledged, following the direction indicated.

"In front of that church is a little common, on the road. You will withdraw your men from the trenches, and Captain Follinsbee will thin out his Regulars so as to cover your portion of the trench. Lead your men to their mounts. Take the nearest road, about one hundred yards to the right of your picket line. Ride down to the square in front of the church, where you will halt and await further orders that will reach you. Keep your men fairly close together, but not bunched; they may either sit in saddle or stand to horse, but must not be away from their mounts."

After saying which the staff officer, keeping his head as low as possible as he left that deadly sector of the trench, ran back to reach and mount his horse. This first line of trenches

being of the so-called "hasty" order, and it being planned to abandon them early, military telephone equipment had not extended so far.

"Bend low as you run, but make time," Captain Bert ordered when he had given his orders. "Forward! Double time, march! Run!"

Though one Gridley boy dropped in that short run, the survivors of the troop were quickly with their horses.

"Whew!" panted Joe Wright, sending his horse up beside his youthful commander's. "I had no idea that war was like this. I can stand it, I believe, but I'll admit that it makes me ill. It's horrible!"

"I've an idea," smiled Bert drearily, "that as yet we haven't fairly tasted the horrors of war. But ride back, Joe. Close up the troop, that you may prevent straggling and observe any casualties that may come to us."

Twelve minutes of steady riding brought the troop to the village, the church and the green. Here Howard halted his men, placing them as directed, and allowing those who wished to dismount and stand to horse.

Then came a pitiful scene. Some two hundred villagers of all ages and both sexes, pallid, haggard with fear, streamed out of the houses and by streets.

"What has happened?" demanded some of

6—1 *Conquest.*

the spokesmen. "Are our soldiers defeated? Do the Germans win on land, as they did on sea? Are we all doomed?"

CHAPTER VII

A BREATH AT THE NEW POST

"**F**RIENDS," Bert replied, "although I have been some hours in the fight I really know little more than you do. All I can tell you is that the Germans drove us out of the first two lines of trenches, and are now engaged in trying to drive us out of the third."

"Did you fellows run away?" piped one old man querulously.

Not even flushing the cadet captain answered simply: "No; we were ordered back here."

"What to do?" asked a woman.

"I don't even know. My orders will reach me here when they're ready."

"Are we in danger here?" asked another woman.

"Frankly, I believe you are," Bert replied. "The Germans could destroy this village in three minutes if they directed some of their artillery this way, but they won't until the village is occupied by fighting American soldiers."

"What had we better do?" asked a man in a desperate voice.

"It will be hard to find safety, if you remain here," Bert rejoined. "The greatest safety would be found in your cellars, which would protect you from infantry fire, if not from shells. The only absolute safety lies in getting as many miles away from here as you can in the shortest space of time. You have motor cars and horses and wagons, haven't you?"

"Humph! You've a nerve to ask that question," grumbled a woman. "You know well enough that your soldiers came along and seized all of our autos and horses for military purposes."

"No; I didn't know it," Bert answered quietly. "Our troop went through to the front yesterday forenoon, and since then this is our first look back of the line. Now, perhaps you, my friends, can tell us something that we're crazy to know. Did any of the American fleet escape destruction yesterday?"

"Haven't you fellows seen the Boston papers?" inquired a man, stepping forward.

"Not a newspaper to-day."

"Then here is my Boston *Globe*," continued the man. "You're welcome to it. I trust it doesn't make you as sick to read as it made me."

Bert snatched at the paper in his eagerness, spreading it out as he sat in saddle. In large type, and in comparatively few words under the startling headlines Bert found a brief but accurate description of the naval tragedy. That in which he was most interested was the information that none of the Navy's major vessels were known to have avoided destruction; certainly none had put in at Boston or other nearby ports. One submarine, badly damaged, had reached Plymouth, but no other vessel or crew was known to be safe. As he read tears came to Howard's eyes.

"It's awful, ain't it?" demanded one man brokenly.

"Yes, and the more so because it was wholly unnecessary," Howard choked.

"How could the Americans' defeat on water have been prevented?" demanded several voices.

"By the simple trick of the American people waking up in time, and seeing to it that their congressmen performed their sacred duty of providing for the country's adequate defense. Friends, the Germans are splendidly brave fighters, but they are no braver than we are. The only reason they're wiping us off the earth is that they have more to fight with, and what they have is better than ours."

"What can we do now?" demanded some one in the panic-stricken crowd.

"Nothing, I'm afraid," Bert answered, "except to hinder the enemy as much and as long as possible. The Germans ought to be able to take all they want of this country within the next few weeks."

"I don't believe it," asserted one man stoutly. "We're going to have soldiers, too. Look on the inside pages of that paper, and you'll find that the President is on the job. He has called for a million volunteers, and I tell you, young fellow, we'll have 'em all raised by to-morrow at sundown. Don't I know? My two sons went away this morning. They're going to fight."

"Are they trained men?" asked Bert.

"No, but they're brave young fellows. The government has guns for 'em, and they'll give good accounts of themselves. And there'll be a million more like 'em. Two million, if necessary, or five million—ten million! Uncle Sam can't be whipped, with the millions of brave men he has."

"It takes at least six months to train a soldier so that he can take care of himself," Bert returned. "In one month, or two, the Germans will have all they want in this country. Then they'll take our money and go back,

though they may claim and hold some of our territory."

"Bosh!" retorted a man impatiently. "All over the country men are running to enlist. All our boys will have to do will be to learn how to march. They know how to shoot already."

"Who'll lead them?" Bert inquired.

"Their officers, of course," came in a laugh from several bystanders.

"We haven't really enough trained officers for even two hundred thousand men," Bert went on gravely. "Untrained officers will make a sad mess of preparing untrained soldiers. Untrained soldiers do not know how to take care of themselves in the field; they lose ten times as many men to a regiment as the Regulars do who fight on the same field. Big losses mean panic, and ignorant volunteers, serving under officers who are little better, are quick to lose their nerve and run away. I know that, for I saw one raw volunteer regiment run away this morning."

As he spoke Bert turned the pages of the newspaper, his eye alighting on other headlines of grave import.

"Fine business this country is in!" he commented gravely. "This paper informs us that Japan's moves are watched with great anxiety at Washington. It is believed that the

Japanese are preparing to descend upon our western coast. The government has a large part of our fleet in those waters, and is hurrying troops that way, and calling out the National Guard in Western States to hurry to the Pacific coast."

"We'll take care of the Japs," asserted a man positively.

"In much the same way that we unprepared fools are taking care of the Germans, sir," retorted Bert ironically. "And I see that the Mexicans, eager to satisfy old grudges, are getting restless in Northern Mexico. Our citizens down on the border are sending thousands of telegrams to Washington demanding sufficient troops be sent there to protect them. Also, the greatest anxiety is felt in Washington over the known fact that Canada is massing troops along the border."

"England ought to be helping us, right now," cried one man in an angry tone of voice.

"England is helping us," laughed Bert bitterly. "Helping us just as we helped her in her war with Germany. Friends, we should have trusted to nothing but our own trained fighting men and our own big fleet and our fighting equipment."

"Are you fellows trained?" demanded a

voice in the crowd. "You're too young to be real soldiers; you look like schoolboys."

"We are," Bert admitted. "Not trained as well as I wish we were, but we've been training at our high school for four years past. We began back in 1916, four years ago. We've spent a lot of our time training, and have had the advantage of much instruction by Regular Army officers. Our good old town of Gridley is American to the core. For four years our people have been seeing to it that our congressman kept hustling all the time to provide proper military strength. If the people everywhere had been as busy as the Gridley folks, we'd have had a big and trained volunteer army, and we'd have had a fleet that Germany wouldn't have dared to attack. Our high school boys were trained, and here we are, to do the best that can be expected of Uncle Sam's Boys. And we've grown-up troops, too. When the call for help came Gridley sent away an infantry militia company of one hundred and fifty men, as well as one platoon of a militia field battery. And back in Gridley, at this moment, are three hundred or more other schoolboys, all partly trained and in further training at this moment. Those boys will be sent, as needed, to make up the losses of this troop in battle. If every little American city had done as well as Gridley has

done, all the German fighting men would still be on their own side of the ocean. But, friends, I am afraid you are losing valuable time in talking. If you want advice, I would advise you to hurry away all the women and children, and keep them walking as fast as they can go for a day or two. All men who do not feel that they can be of use here should go with the women and children."

"What can those of us who are able do to serve?" asked a broad-shouldered man who appeared to be about fifty years old.

"A few of you, in pairs, could relieve the stretcher bearers, who are being overworked to-day, and will doubtless be overworked for many days to come."

"But men who carry stretchers have to go right up where the bullets are flying and the shells are exploding, don't they?" asked a woman whom Howard judged to be the man's wife.

"Certainly, madam," Bert answered. "But should nothing be risked to save the men who have given their all in fighting for their country? Are we to divide our men into two classes—Americans who will make sacrifices for their flag, and men who don't dare to make such sacrifices?"

"The boy is right," broke in an elderly man.

"I'm not a youngster, but I can at least carry burdens and risk my life doing it. Who'll go with me?"

One after another several men stepped forward, until Bert's alert eyes had counted ten.

"Where do we go?" asked one of the men who had first spoken. Bert Howard directed them where to find the nearest field dressing station, where they could offer their services to the surgeon in charge.

Shortly after these men had gone several bullets whistled spitefully in the air, then dropped uncomfortably near where Bert's company stood talking to the villagers. Private Carter, of the Gridley troop, winced, then glanced down at blood trickling from the calf of one of his legs.

"The Germans are coming," screamed a girl. "They're shooting at us."

"It's time, anyway, that all the women and children get away from here," declared Howard. "The men who can't serve should go away with them, as guides and protectors."

That was enough, aided by the bullets, to induce many of the village's inhabitants to start down the road, though each fugitive first ran into a house and gathered up money or small articles to carry with him.

Bert rode over to where a corporal was bandaging Carter's injured leg.

"Carter, you may remain here until the first ambulance goes by," Captain Bert directed. "Then you will turn over your mount and arms and go to whatever hospital the surgeon may order. The first sergeant will enter Private Carter's name on the list of the wounded."

Along the road, in a scurrying cloud of dust, came a runabout containing a soldier chauffeur and an officer.

"Captain Howard!" sang out the officer.

"Here, sir."

"Captain Howard, some of the more poorly trained volunteer regiments are becoming hard to control on the firing line. It is expected that some of these volunteers will break away and run without orders when the Germans make their next and most determined assault. You will station two squads of men in the road at this point, and use the rest of your men in two detachments supporting the road detachment on either flank. The flankers will cover four hundred yards on each side of the road. To the right of these flankers a dependable militia company will be thrown, and to the left a company of Regular infantry. If any men, or body of men try to pass here from our lines, without the sure appearance of being under the control

of their officers, you will stop them and turn them back to the line. If they refuse to obey the order such men are to be shot. I trust you understand exactly—to be shot! And if any officers try to pass your line who are plainly running away, you will attempt to turn them back to their posts, failing in which you are to see to it that they are shot. You are thrown across the road because you are mounted men and can move nimbly in intercepting skedad-dlers. The commands that I have given you are by order of General Carleton. Be good enough to repeat these orders.”

Bert repeated them carefully, after which the officer continued:

“These orders do not apply to medical officers or hospital men, nor to men who are wounded. Nor do they apply to staff officers or orderlies moving in discharge of their duties. You will use due discretion, but are to see to it that no skulkers get by, even though you have to shoot them. Do not waste time in making prisoners of skulkers.”

That order given, the staff officer ordered the runabout to be turned around and driven back to the line.

Bert immediately saw to the stationing of his men, directing that in the case of the men stationed on the right and left flanks the order to

shoot any skulker should be given by the nearest sergeant if neither Lieutenant Wright nor himself were at the point in question.

Ten minutes passed. The German artillery fusillade, which had stopped at intervals, was now resumed with greatest vigor. Even two miles away the din was frightful.

A few more minutes passed when, glancing up the road, Lieutenant Joe called:

“Here come some of the skeedaddlers, sir!”

CHAPTER VIII

WITH THE BATTLE'S SKULKERS

A DOZEN uniformed men, five of them hatless and only three bearing rifles, though all were in uniform, came racing down the road, every now and then glancing backward over their shoulders as they ran.

Then they caught sight of the Gridley troop, and, in the distance, to right and left, of two companies of infantry advancing from cover.

After that the men came on more slowly, but presently they came within hail.

“Halt! Why aren't you men up at the line?” Bert demanded.

“Keep right on, mates,” advised the foremost man.

"Squad ready, aim!" ordered the Gridley boy, and there was an ominous click of bolts just before the cavalry carbines were brought to shoulder. It looked like real business.

"Hold on, there!" blustered the spokesman. "Don't you shoot!" But he and the others halted, standing in their tracks.

"Have you men any reason for being back here?" Bert asked.

"That's none of your business," retorted the impudent spokesman.

"You've answered me," Bert continued dryly. "My orders are to halt all skulkers, and to shoot all who do not instantly obey the order to return to the front. I'll give you men until I count five to face about and move to the front. One, two, three, four, five!" Crack!

All but the surly spokesman had obeyed the order and started hastily back up the road. Scowling, the spokesman had stood his ground, and Bert, afraid that a volley would hit some of those who were obeying, had drawn his own revolver and fired, hitting the obstinate one so that he fell to the ground with an oath.

"Corporal," Bert ordered calmly, as he replaced his automatic in its holster, "dismount and examine and bandage that fellow's wound. Then keep him here until an ambulance comes."

While the bandaging was proceeding, Bert rode a few paces forward, looking on.

"Where is this fellow wounded?" he asked.

"The bullet went through the fleshy part of the hip, sir. I don't believe it hit the bone."

"Have this man lifted to one side, and see to it that he is put in the first ambulance going back," the cadet captain ordered.

As the fellow was lifted Bert rode back to his post. Out on his right flank he saw two skulkers stopped by a sergeant. At command they turned shame-facedly, going back toward the front. Within the next twenty minutes forty or fifty more men appeared on the ground dominated by the young cavalrymen. All of them started back to the front, only a few of them needing to be threatened with leveled carbines.

And now a man raced down the road, calling out in fright:

"Run, boys, run! The Germans are coming in motor cars. Run! You will be killed if you stand here!"

He waved his arms wildly, glaring with bloodshot eyes as he ran pantingly toward the troopers in the road.

"That fellow will have to be shot," muttered Lieutenant Joe. "He's scared so stiff that nothing but a bullet will halt him."

Bert shouted the order to halt, but the fellow

continued to run toward them. Several carbines were leveled.

"Don't shoot until ordered," called Bert, in a low voice, something in the skulker's unusual manner attracting his instant attention. "Ride out, some of you men, and surround him."

So neatly was this maneuver executed that the skulker found himself completely circled by a ring of horse's flanks.

"What ails you, my man?" Bert demanded.

"The Germans are coming in automobiles, I tell you!" shrieked the skulker. "They're shooting shells bigger than flour barrels and they're building a railroad to rush through here. You fellows save yourselves while you can."

"Sergeant," directed the Gridley commander, "dismount with four other men and throw this fellow down. Tie him, hand and foot. He's crazy—gone mad from the very fear of battle. Don't handle him any more roughly than you have to do, but tie him tightly and hold him for an ambulance."

Hearing a motor car behind, Bert turned, to behold three instead of a single car. All of them displayed the Red Cross emblem. Behind them another string of cars was coming.

"Off the road, men, to let the ambulances pass," Bert directed, and then, signaling the

foremost car, he called as it slowed down speed:

"Doctor, if you have room on your return I shall be glad to have you stop for two wounded men and for another who has gone insane."

"Stop the smallest car you see behind me, and let that ambulance take the three back at once, Captain," replied the surgeon briskly, after which the train continued on its way, all except one smaller ambulance that the Gridley boy stopped with a signal. He saw Private Carter and the two skulkers taken in, and the car start back. Just then Lieutenant Joe Wright called to him:

"Captain Howard, here comes a wholesale contract!"

It was, indeed. Over the crest of the hill came at least three hundred panting men. Here and there among them appeared an officer, madly exhorting the men to halt, turn and go back. They were volunteers, yet it was plain that the officers were superior to those whom they commanded.

At sight of the guard posted across the road some of the fugitives halted, staring, but the great mass of skulkers came rapidly on despite the pleading of their officers that they behave like men.

"Halt, every one of you!" roared Cadet Captain Howard, riding forward a few paces.

7—1 *Conquest.*

"Halt, and obey your own officers. Perhaps you men are afraid to stay at the front and be shot. Up yonder, where the real men are, you *may* be shot. If you try to get by us, you're sure to be shot. Halt! Troop, ready, aim!"

In the face of the little round muzzles of so many carbines, promptly brought to shoulder, even this large body of skulkers saw the need of reflection.

"You gentlemen who are officers had better come forward and be safe before we fire," Bert called steadily.

"Thank you," replied a middle-aged man who wore a major's shoulder straps. "We officers prefer to remain with our men, where we belong. But don't hesitate to fire, Captain, if my men don't stop."

"I won't hesitate, sir," promised Bert.

Finding themselves opposed with so much military snap and promptness, and noting that detachments were moving in from the two infantry companies, even the most frightened of the skulkers came to their senses.

"Major, may I suggest that you form your men?" Bert called pleasantly.

"Battalion fall in!" roared the major.

Nearly all of the halted skulkers obeyed.

"March the men away who'll follow you back to the line, Major!" Bert called cheerily.

“We’ll shoot the rest after you move off with the useful part of your command.”

That pleasant little threat had its effect, causing nearly all of the rest of the halted men to fall in with their companies. There was a rapid counting of fours in each company. Then, at the major’s command, the battalion started back to the front. Three or four men had lingered out of ranks, looking furtively about them like frightened rabbits, but now they ran to their places.

“Easy enough!” chuckled Joe Wright. **“It was almost a shame to take the money. Yet it would have been a tough job to shoot those men down.**

“But see here,” Joe went on, for he loved an argument when it didn’t interfere with duty, **“here are a troop and two companies, one of them Regulars, removed from the firing line in order that we may stop skulkers. Are all the skulkers that we’ll stop to-day and turn back worth as much as three companies of men that won’t run until ordered to do it?”**

“Probably not,” Bert agreed, **“but only dependable companies can be detailed to stop skulkers. It’s worth a lot to teach every man who has any skulk in him that he can’t get away, even if he tries to do it. Besides, fear in a first battle isn’t terribly uncommon, except**

among the Regulars, who have been trained to stay with their officers in any kind of a fix. A lot of these men we've turned back to-day will be steady enough in subsequent fights."

During the next hour at least two hundred more skulkers were turned back. Bert, when he had time to listen and think, was glad to note that at last the American forces were succeeding in holding back the invaders. Hardly had that thought passed his mental vision, however, than he heard a heavy rolling sound up the road. Glancing toward the sound he saw the head of an artillery column coming over the rise of ground as fast as the mules could draw guns and caissons. Once more he ordered his own men out of the road to let the column move past. There were several batteries, all of either five-inch field pieces or five-inch howitzers.

As the artillery colonel at the head of the long, noisy column passed the two young Gridley officers he cordially returned their formal salutes.

Half an hour later three more field batteries came back. Then up the road, moving toward the front came a swift-flying train of about a hundred automobiles, bearing at more than thirty miles an hour, an infantry battalion of six hundred Regulars, with the their officers and equipment. As they went by, these late-ar-

iving professional soldiers cheered the young troopers on general principles.

Hardly had the automobiles delivered their loads at the front, returned and passed on, when General Carleton and staff, in three automobiles, and attended by a body-guard in ten more cars, rolled by from the front.

"We're retiring to a new line of defense, Captain," shouted a staff officer, standing up in one of the cars. "You will remain here until relieved or ordered back by a staff or field officer. Transmit this as General Carleton's order to the two companies on your flanks."

Saluting, Bert promptly dispatched two sergeants to ride in either direction with the orders.

"Perhaps we're going to have the honor of holding the whole German army back," chuckled Lieutenant Joe Wright. "No matter! We're ready for it!"

CHAPTER IX

IN THE WIRE ENTANGLEMENTS

DOWN the road came a battalion from the front, but at double time. Behind that came two other battalions. Over the slope and across the fields moved other bodies of troops.

Now the infantry firing sounded much nearer. Then came a line of skirmishers, in open order, firing rapidly just before they left the crest, after which they moved down the road and across fields and along other roads at a swift run.

Over the crest appeared solid, grayish masses of German infantry, moving steadily along with a motion suggestive of the irresistible flow of water.

Just as the German infantry masses came over the crest the retreating skirmishers halted, threw themselves down, pouring out a galling rifle and machine-gun fire against the enemy silhouetted against the betraying sky-line. Within three minutes, however, the skirmishers once more took to their heels, though in good order, led by their officers.

“And there comes the German orchestra of war!” cried Joe, pointing to at least a dozen enemy field batteries rolling over the rise of ground.

By this time the skirmishers had fallen back in line with the guard line of which the Gridley boys were a part. As the skirmishers began firing swiftly Captain Bert Howard sent non-commissioned officers down his line with the command:

“Make your horses lie down, and lie down behind them, firing over their flanks. Aim for the German infantry. At the signal from my saber’s flash begin firing slowly and carefully at will.”

Though the firing of the Gridley boys was really excellent, it was soon apparent that, despite annoying enemy losses, nothing could stop the onward march of German infantry. And the same thing was happening over a battle front of many long miles!

Two or three minutes later a dismaying condition came upon the troopers. Their ammunition was exhausted.

“We can fight only with sabers and auto-matics now,” Bert told his lieutenant.

“Then, sir, at the last moment, shall we charge the enemy in one last expiring effort of patriotic suicide?” asked Joe Wright.

“Not in the absence of orders to charge,” Bert answered, shaking his head.

“Then I suppose all we can do is to remain here, in saddle at the last, and use our sabers holding the road?”

“Of course we’ll defend ourselves hand to hand, while we last, when the Germans get close enough.”

Now the enemy field batteries went into action. Two shells, well planted, demolished the little church, leaving it a mass of gutted wreckage. Evidently the enemy artillerymen were of the opinion that the edifice might have sheltered sharpshooters.

Other shells tore up the ground in advance of the American skirmish line of desperate fighters. Much more work was furnished for the hospital men, the Gridley troop contributing a wounded sergeant and two men to the work of the rushing stretcher bearers.

Now the retreat sounded on the bugles along the line. Back started the skirmishers. Bert turned to glance at the Regulars on one flank. They were lying low in their position, still firing. On the other flank the National Guard company wavered, then returned doggedly to duty.

“It must be,” Bert shouted over an interval of six feet to his lieutenant, “that our original

orders hold and that we are not to fall back until special orders reach us."

Nevertheless, it could not be expected that the Gridley troopers would witness the departure of all except the special guard with other than a sinking feeling of heart. The advancing masses of German infantry, looked, as they were, invincible to the three hundred Americans left behind.

Down the road a cloud of dust showed, but Bert and Joe were gazing the other way at the enemy. A staff officer galloped up to the Gridley leader, calling:

"Captain, you will mount and fall back upon the first line." At the same moment the staff officer waved the order to the two flanking infantry companies.

"We are out of carbine ammunition," young Howard reported.

"Then pass through the line. About eight hundred yards to the rear of the line, on this same road, you will find the ammunition train of your brigade. Replenish, and then return, dismounted, to Follinsbee's battalion, which you will find posted half a mile from this road, on the new line."

By the time the words were out of his mouth the staff officer had whirled about and was riding back like the wind.

"Rise!" warned the bugle. "Prepare to mount. Mount! Forward as skirmishers, march! Trot! Gallop!"

Up and away at top speed raced the young Gridley troopers. The two infantry companies had started already, but almost at the outset the mounted force swept by and distanced them. Three-quarters of a mile away the new line was found. Only the road remained open, for here trenches had been dug, trenches that were deep and broad, with ledges for riflemen to stand on. Before the trenches had been stretched a complex series of wire entanglements, some six lines in all, one behind the other. On the road some three hundred engineer soldiers waited to close the connecting lines of barbed wire as soon as the three retreating units should be safely inside the line.

Down the road, over a temporary bridge, rode the young troopers, slowly to a jog on account of the flimsy character of the bridge. Then on down the road to the brigade ammunition train they made their way. It took a few minutes to wait their turn to be served. Then, leaving one man in every four behind with the horses, Bert Howard led the diminished remainder of his comrades across the field to Captain Follinsbee's position. By this time the two infantry companies were already in-

side the line. The engineers swiftly completed the wire entanglements across the road, retreated over the loose bridge and went on down the road.

It was Prescott who came running toward the Gridley boys, waving his sword and shouting:

“On the left! We’ll close our men up to make room for you.”

As Prescott’s men sprang down from the firing ledges and ran to the right along the broad, deep trench, Bert stationed his men where they belonged. Each boy stepped up to the firing ledge, rested his rifle over the top and awaited orders.

“This trench looks almost as safe as a parlor,” laughed Captain Bert.

“This has been building for twenty-four hours,” Prescott explained. “The engineers took charge, and they impressed thousands of citizens and made them dig or lay wire entanglements. It looks as if it would take the Germans a week to get through here, and it would, if it were not for the damage that the fine enemy artillery can work here.”

“But they can flank us, of course?” asked Joe Wright.

“They may attempt that,” Prescott answered seriously. “Of course our flanks are being watched, and any attempt to flank us will

result in shifting of troops by General Carleton. You see the two airships away to the north? They are keeping watch against any effort to turn our flank, or any plan of the Germans to land another army further up the coast. We have other airships out, watching over the whole of the Massachusetts coast. If we were ready in all particulars as we are in airships the German commander would have a much more serious problem."

"Then we have enough airships, sir?" queried Lieutenant Joe.

"No; not for a campaign. Some of our aircraft will be destroyed, and others will go bad in their machinery. To-day we have airships enough. In a week or a fortnight we may be sadly lacking in these wonderfully useful adjuncts of warfare."

"There is one of our aircraft several miles to the rear of us," said Howard. "If it is trying to serve us why doesn't it cross our lines and go out over the Germans?"

"It is probably engaged in observing the German army and the enemy naval and transport fleet," Dick replied. "If necessary that aircraft will pass us and go out over the Germans. For the present, from where he flies, the officer in charge can probably see all that he needs to see. It is important to save our airships from

destruction. And the Germans are not flying over our heads at present—doubtless because there is nothing concerning us that they need badly enough to know to induce them to risk their own aviators or craft.”

In another moment all conversation was interrupted by the fury and racket of a new bombardment. German troops were within sight, and had been able to flag back the range accurately. Shells fell among the wire entanglements, in front of the trenches, behind them, and many dropped down among the defenders. The slaughter had again begun in the most approved fashion.

After fifteen minutes of bombardment gray masses of German infantry suddenly emerged from cover, charging straight at the wire entanglements. Nor did they stop when they reached the lines of barbed wire, but, with nippers, severed the wires and came on. They came slowly, though, and were soon almost hopelessly entangled.

“Now we have ’em where they’ll flounder!” yelled Prescott, darting over to Bert’s side for a moment. “Shoot, shoot, shoot—and keep it up.”

CHAPTER X

THE BLACK FORGETFULNESS

IT was the first triumph for the American forces. Though within ten minutes after the first attempt the Germans had succeeded in cutting their way through two lines of barbed wire entanglements, they now came upon more complicated ones.

As they came forward the enemy preserved as good a fire as they were able to do, but rapid progress was impossible. There was no difficulty in cutting the strands of the barbed wire fencing, yet the instant they tried to go past this the gray-clad soldiers found themselves floundering in closely tangled masses of barbed wire that had been stretched at a height about two-thirds of the way up to an average man's knee. Their shins and calves torn on the barbs as they tried to force their way forward, the enemy could not fire rapidly, nor with good effect.

R-r-r-rip! American machine guns, their muzzles swinging in arcs of circles, threw bullets through every foot of frontal space. Germans hit and falling, lay across the cruel barbs. The soldiers standing in the American trenches

poured in their galling fire, finding delight in shooting slowly enough to do sharpshooters' work. The enemy losses, in the first fifteen minutes that the Germans floundered in the entanglements, were enormous.

Every minute the German losses were becoming more appalling, yet the gray-clad men stuck to their desperate adventure with wonderful grit and doggedness. These men had been sent to storm the American trenches, and they were carrying on their work at no matter what cost.

But at last the German commander saw the hopelessness of it for the present, and the retreat was sounded. As the gray-clad men faced about they were still subjected to a galling fire from machine guns and rifles. Much the same thing was going on everywhere along the miles of American trenches.

Just as the last of the retreating enemy had floundered free of the entanglements, and were fleeing across the open space beyond, the ground under their feet blew up, for this ground had been carefully and amply mined, and now the great charges of explosive were set off by electric control. Hundreds more of the Germans died, or were torn so that many of them would never fight again.

As the last of the enemy, save for the dead and wounded who had been left on the field,

vanished under cover, the American fire ceased, and for the time being comparative quiet reigned. Soon the brigade ammunition cars were driven up to the trenches, and case after case of fresh ammunition was dumped out and distributed.

Bert stood gazing at a dozen airships that had risen three miles to the rear and were now heading in a general northeasterly direction.

"This, you see," explained Prescott, sauntering over to Bert, "is where we send up our flyers to look out for any flanking attempts that the Germans may now try. Yet, if they try to turn our left flank, they will find there also trenches like these, provided with wire entanglements and mined ground. Inferior as we are in numbers, we are now, I understand, prepared to give the German commander what may prove to be a hard and perhaps impossible nut to crack unless he is prepared to sacrifice thousands of his soldiers."

Boom! sounded a heavy gun toward the sea. A German aeroplane rose and came toward the American line to observe the falling of the shot. Instantly three American aircraft rose and flew forward, bent on destroying the enemy flyer. Half a dozen more German aircraft rose, and from somewhere came Reade and Hazelton in their own machine. A few moments, and the



Shells Fell In and Near the Trenches.

duel in the air absorbed the attention of officers and men in the trenches.

"Bully old Reade! Great old Harry!" cheered Prescott, as he saw that well-marked craft open fire with her machine gun, driving direct at two German Taubes. "Bully!"

This last exclamation was drawn forth by the sight of one of the Taubes, shattered by bullets, flutter earthward, then turn and come down faster.

"Great work!" yelled Dick, as he saw Reade and Hazelton's flyer send another enemy craft down to destruction. But now half a dozen of the enemy's reserve craft rose, and sailed straight at Reade, trying to get over his head. The battle was sharp, glorious, but Reade, after destroying another of his annoyers, prudently came back over the American lines. As the Germans pursued, aircraft guns behind the trenches were turned upon them. One Taube was brought down, but the rest retreated, secure, anyway, in their knowledge that their own artillery now had the exact range for the American trenches.

Soon a riot of shells fell in and near the trenches. The American soldiers, having no other employment at the moment, used their trenching tools to dig burrows in the walls of their trenches. Such shelters afforded partial

protection from flying fragments of shell.

Standing behind two of his men thus employed, Bert opened his mouth to advise them. For the hundredth part of a second he felt a strange oppression against the top of his head. Then he knew no more.

After that youthful Captain Howard had vague impressions of discomfort that he could not analyze and did not try to. Yet at last he opened his eyes. He lay on a cot, near the open doorway of a large tent. Outside, beyond, all Nature was green and smiling. A soft summer wind stirred through the tent. Bert had a general impression that there were other cots and other men on them. Then a girl of not more than twenty came forward, smiled and laid a cool hand on his hot forehead.

"You were not so badly hurt as many of the poor fellows, Captain Howard," said the nurse, for such her simple uniform proclaimed her to be.

"What happened to me?" Bert asked.

"I don't know. You were brought in here ticketed as having a fractured skull, but Lieutenant Haslett, the surgeon, said it was all a mistake, and he brought in Major Shipton, who made a careful examination and said your skull certainly was not fractured, and that you would soon be all right. But there is a friend of yours

close by. When he drops in again he can tell you just what happened. He will be here soon, I think."

"Nurse, here!" sounded an authoritative voice. The girl hastening away, Howard had no opportunity to ask who the friend was, or, indeed, where he himself now was.

"We'll take a look at your friend, and see how he is coming on," said a brisk, quiet voice outside. Then two men in uniform entered. One wore the shoulder straps and insignia of a surgeon-major; the other was Dick Prescott.

"Why, here's our patient with his eyes open!" said the major heartily.

"Howard, I'm glad to see you all right," declared Prescott, reaching forward and gripping the cadet officer's hand. "Major, how soon are we going to have this lad up on his feet?"

"I'll tell you, in a minute," promised the medical officer, passing his hand over Bert's skin to assure himself that there was no fever.

"Captain, do you feel dizzy?"

"No, sir," Bert smiled; "I'm hungry. I'd like something to eat."

"Excellent," replied the major, taking Bert's pulse under his trained fingers. "Do you feel at all weak?"

"No, sir."

"Good. You may get up as soon as you wish. Your friend, Prescott, will help you to dress, I know."

From a package under the cot Bert's clothing was produced. The major, after nodding, went on to visit other cases in the hospital, then came back to say:

"Captain Howard, while you may go about the camp quietly, and may stay with your troop, you will not return to duty until to-morrow morning."

Dick soon had the young man dressed. So far Bert had sat upon the edge of the cot. Glancing about him he saw that the other cots were filled with wounded men. There was blood on many of the bandages, yet there were no really frightful cases here, this tent being filled with men who might be expected soon to return to duty.

"What——" began Bert.

"Wait until we get outside," Prescott warned him. "Some of the fellows in here are not quite in shape to hear exciting talk. Now, do you feel like trying to walk? Wait; there's a friend of mine outside who will give you an arm on the other side."

As Dick walked to the door there stepped inside a tall, slim, sun-browned young man who

had the look of brawny competence stamped all over him. His eye was quick, his smile shrewd and humorous, his air utterly frank. At first sight Bert knew that he liked this stranger.

"Tom," began Dick, "this is a present-day Gridley H. S. boy, Cadet Captain Albert Howard. Howard, this is my friend, Tom Reade, just at present volunteer aviator—the one who saved us out at sea."

"I hear you fellows have gone a whole lot ahead of the Gridley fellows of a few years ago," said Tom heartily, as he took the cadet officer's hand. "I'm not a bit jealous, you understand, Howard. Gridley H. S. ought to turn out better fellows every year."

"So you're Tom Reade?" cried Bert. "All I can think of at present to say is that I am delighted."

The two men helped him outside, leading him to a motor car that stood not far away, a soldier driver at the steering wheel.

"In with you!" cried Reade, picking Bert up in his arms and setting him on the rear seat. The two older Gridley boys got in on each side of the young cadet.

As the car turned out of a field and started down the road Bert gazed about him with lively interest. The country hereabouts was beautiful.

"What place is this?" he asked.

"Arlington," Dick answered. "It's one of the pretty spots just outside of Boston."

"Are you on leave, or are we defending Boston now?"

"Neither, I'm sorry to say," Prescott replied. "Wait until we reach the line. Then I'll tell you the news."

"And you'll be sorry you asked," commented Reade somberly.

A short drive brought them in sight of troops, artillery and trenches. Bert was lifted from the car just as he discovered that he was behind the trench occupied by his own Gridley troop. Behind the trenches stood rows of low shelter tents. Lieutenant Joe Wright came quickly forward to shake hands.

"Now, I'll tell you all you want to know," Prescott promised, as soon as Howard had been seated on an overturned box.

"In the first place, then," begged Bert, "the fleet?"

"Nothing has been heard, except from the crippled submarine that put in at Plymouth," Dick answered gravely. "It is believed that all our other vessels were lost, with all on board. That means the death of my good friends, Darrin and Dalzell, both lieutenants in the submarine flotilla."

As he spoke Prescott could not keep back a few tears. Reade turned his head away for a few moments.

“As for your injury,” Prescott went on, “an exploding shell threw up a clod of earth that fell on your head. You looked done for when you were picked up. The first surgeon said your skull was fractured, and we gave you up. When your turn came you were hustled out here to the hospital. Shipton said you were only stunned, and would be all right in a few hours after you came to; he proved to be right. Arlington is a long way from where you fought yesterday. Last night it was pitch dark. Soon after nightfall the Germans left enough of their troops to hold us, and sent twenty-two thousand men to land at Dorchester. They ran into a force of two thousand Regulars and six thousand National Guardsmen, but in two hours they had defeated and almost wiped out that force, and were in possession of Boston. So, as we were useless and ridiculous away up the coast, we were put aboard trains, crowded into trolley cars, thrown into automobiles, and brought down here. We now have a thin line, starting near Revere Beach, running out through Chelsea, Arlington, Waltham, Newton and a few little towns. We are, if you please, ordered to hold several times our number of

the enemy cooped up in Boston! This morning we heard heavy cannonading. After it stopped we were told that the German warships had stood off, out of range of the guns of our forts, and using the longer range German guns, had demolished our Boston harbor forts. So now the enemy has destroyed all opposition except that which can be offered by this little nucleus of an army to which you have the present honor of belonging. Isn't it a happy little story for a patriot to have to hear?"

CHAPTER XI

NEW DOINGS IN BOSTON TOWN

"**H**ERE comes Hazelton; look at the scowl on his face," interposed Tom Reade.

Harry came up quickly. He waited only to be introduced to Bert Howard, then started in with his news.

"You soldiers wrecked all the machinery in the factories at Haverhill and Lynn yesterday, didn't you?" he demanded.

"I didn't do any of it personally," Dick answered, "as I wasn't at those points. But I know that general orders were to wreck all factories in towns we had to abandon."

"The Germans have gone the American Army one better," Hazelton continued. "This morning the Germans sent columns to occupy Haverhill and Lynn and to look over the factories to see what they could be made to turn out in the way of shoes, etc., for the German army. When they found all the factories wrecked they set fire to both cities. The homeless people have been driven out by the smoke and heat, and now they are without homes and without food. The German commander has sent warning to General Carleton that every city will be burned in which factories have been destroyed by our troops."

"You get the news promptly," commented Prescott. "I don't believe the two cities have been on fire very long."

"It came out to General Carleton under a flag of truce," Hazelton returned. "After that it spread through the camp. But we have at least one joke on the Germans."

"If we have one single thing on the enemy," implored Reade, "please tell us quickly."

"This morning the German commander summoned all the bankers who could be found in Boston," Harry resumed, "and told them that Boston had been assessed for a war indemnity of three hundred million dollars in gold, which must be paid within twenty-four hours."

But it was not paid, and it won't be."

"Why not?" asked Bert.

"Because, forty-eight hours before, about every dollar in every Boston bank had been loaded on to a freight train, which, under heavy guard, was started west. The money is now probably a thousand miles from Boston."

"Then perhaps the Germans will burn Boston," proposed Prescott.

"Oh, they couldn't—they wouldn't dare do that!" Hazelton protested.

"Time alone will show," Dick said musingly.

"It is plain that the invaders mean to have their own way about everything, and that they will mete out severe punishment to whoever hinders them. No one can say 'nay' to a victorious army."

Though the weather was ideal, and though there was no longer sound of battle, night closed in gloomily over the defenders of the new American lines. After dark there was a vivid red blotch against the sky, furnished by the flames from the burning cities of Haverhill and Lynn. Bert lay down that night with a heavy heart, only one of thousands among the all but helpless defenders of Uncle Sam in Massachusetts.

In the morning came word of the German

procedure with the bankers who had been unable to raise the indemnity in gold. The same bankers had been placed under close arrest, and had been told to write and demand the return of their gold to Boston. If the money was not returned to Boston, then on the third day of such failure two of the bankers held as hostages were to be drawn by lot and taken out and shot. Thereafter, each day, two more of the bankers would be shot, until either the three hundred millions demanded had been paid over, or else until the supply of banker-hostages had run out. Under such a threat the bankers had quickly written letters directing that Boston's bank funds be sent back to Boston. Their letters had been forwarded to General Carleton, who had wired the President. The latter, as commander-in-chief of the United States military forces, had replied that no American money could be permitted to pass into territory held by enemy forces.

The three days passed, no American gold being allowed to be returned into Boston. Upon the third day, at noon, the imprisoned bankers were assembled. Two were selected by lot, and taken out and shot without delay. Then the German commander sent another note to General Carleton.

On the day following two more bankers were

shot, and on the third day another pair met death.

In Boston, since the German occupation, the newspapers had been suppressed. True, the *Transcript* came out every afternoon, but under German control. The sheet contained only such bulletins and information as the conquerors cared to have reach the people.

In this state of affairs the New York and Albany newspapers had a large sale through Massachusetts. The New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad ran east as far as Brockton. The Boston and Albany reached Newton, and the Fitchburg Division ran from Albany to Waltham. These trains brought daily food supplies to a people shut off from the Boston markets. War supplies also filled many freight trains. Alas, there were but few soldiers sent through, for, outside of those held to guard New York, there were no more soldiers in the East. Philadelphia, being believed to be safe from attack at present, had been left unguarded save for a few hundred marines and Regulars.

In these days, when the Germans failed to advance, citizens flocked to the American lines. One important-looking man, carrying two New York newspapers, approached Prescott, Holmes, Howard and Wright.

"Cheer up," he cried. "You men will soon be all right. There'll soon be enough soldiers here to rush the Germans into the sea."

"Where are they coming from?" asked Prescott incredulously.

"Coming from?" echoed the citizen. "We have 'em already. See this paper? The President's call for volunteers has been already answered by the enrollment of a million and a half volunteers. Hurrah!"

"But they're not soldiers yet," Prescott explained patiently. "These million and a half men will have to be trained. That will take a few months. Then with what are they going to fight?"

"With guns, of course," returned the citizen disgustedly.

"Let's see," suggested Dick, checking off on his fingers. "We have in the country nine hundred and fifty thousand rifles. The Japanese situation looks so threatening that three hundred and fifty thousand rifles were sent to the Pacific Coast to arm the volunteers there. The Mexicans are acting peevishly, and two hundred thousand rifles have gone to the border States. That leaves four hundred thousand rifles for fighting the Germans. In two or three weeks more they'll have at least four hundred thousand veteran troops in this country.

We'll have to fight them with an equal number of rifles, and without any artillery worth mentioning, while the Germans carry hundreds of guns, and soon may have a couple thousand pieces of artillery here. Moreover, all told, in the East, at present, we have ninety thousand trained and half-trained fighting men. That leaves about three hundred thousand rifles with which to train the volunteers who are to reinforce us. The Germans are not limited to four hundred thousand men, either, but can deliver veterans at the rate of at least two hundred thousand a month. We cannot, at any stage of the game manufacture rifles fast enough to keep up with the German arrivals of troops."

"But we can increase our rifle-making machinery."

"In the course of a year we could increase our rifle-making machinery very handsomely," Greg Holmes broke in. "But will the Germans wait for us to do it? My friend, take your map of the United States and draw a straight line from the head of Chesapeake Bay to Lake Erie. East of that line are located all of our factories that turn out munitions of war. The Germans can seize, and we can't prevent them, all of that territory within the next few weeks. Where are we going to make our rifles then? And, if

the Germans go as far west as Pittsburgh, where are we going to get our steel?"

The citizen had lost his confident air. Instead he looked tremendously worried.

"Why haven't we arms and ammunition factories all through the Middle West?" he demanded. "Why did we leave it all here at the seaboard, so that an enemy could rush over and take away from us all our chances for putting up a fight? Who is to blame for this state of affairs?"

"You are, partly," Greg explained.

"I?" demanded the citizen, in astonishment.

"Did you ever sit down and write your congressman, instructing him to vote for thorough preparedness against war? Did you ever persuade your neighbor and friends to write him also? Did you ever make any effort to show your congressman that he must work, early and late, to see this country placed on a footing where it could fight effectively at need?"

"Why—er—er—no," admitted the citizen.

"Then you have your own share of guilt to bear for the situation," Greg drove home. "Also for the deaths of the few soldiers the country now has. We men are going to fight as long as we last, rather than surrender. But we are going to be killed in doing it. We could truly drive the Germans into the sea if

you voting gentlemen had seen to it that we had enough comrades to do the job right. It's too late now."

CHAPTER XII

ON THE HEADQUARTERS MISSION

FOR several days the Germans in Boston and along the coast kept the American defenders guessing. Though our military airships roared and scouted toward Boston, and over the city, no movements of enemy troops past the closest suburbs could be detected. Yet it was incomprehensible that the German government, having declared war, could be content with the capture of Boston alone of our great cities.

After eight banker hostages had been drawn by lot, and duly shot, the German commander gave up that attempt to coerce the President into allowing American gold to be returned to Boston.

Without warning, however, German regiments were marched to the wealthy Back Bay district. There every private home was entered and thoroughly stripped. Every portable article of unusual value was seized, ticketed with the owner's name and removed.

9—1 *Conquest.*

Jewelry and valuable paintings were especially sought.

The owners were told that they should have their property back when the indemnity had been paid.

German soldiers stripped the Boston Public Library and the Art Museum of their precious treasures. These, stowed aboard German transport ships, were sent to Germany.

Though within the usages of war, this so enraged several householders, or members of their families, that the raiding troops, while in the streets, were fired upon from cover by those who had lost property thus. Invariably the citizen who so took matters into his own hands was found, dragged out into the street and shot. The conquerors made it plain, from the first hour, that any desperate resistance to German rule was punishable with prompt death.

Despite the excellent training that the Gridley troopers had had Bert did not allow his men to grow rusty during these days of freedom from fighting. Every forenoon he sent out one platoon at a time to drill in saddle, while keeping the other platoon in the trenches. In the afternoon the other platoon was sent afield for drill. Thus troopers and horses were kept constantly in the best condition.

Late one afternoon Captain Howard came

back with one of his platoons. The horses were left at picket line, after which Bert marched the detachment to the space behind the trench, where he dismissed. Then, having an hour to spare before supper, he strolled over to the infantry company on his right to see if he could find Prescott. That young officer was standing outside his tent talking with a staff officer, the latter standing holding his horse's bridle.

"I'd like that job beyond anything," Bert heard Lieutenant Prescott declare eagerly. "Can't you present me to General Carleton and recommend me for the detail?"

"I had you in mind when I heard the plan spoken of," answered the staff officer. "Besides, the plan calls for a boy to accompany you, and I remembered that you have, under your eye, a cadet troop. One of the youngsters from that troop ought to make the very one to accompany you."

Though the conversation made him all agog with curiosity, Bert, feeling that so far as he was concerned the talk was a private one, turned to walk away. But Dick Prescott called to him.

"Anstey," declared the infantryman, "this is Cadet Captain Howard, and he would be the very youngster for the purpose. Howard, Lieutenant Anstey was a classmate of mine at

West Point. We called him 'Anstey from Virginia.' He has been telling me of some very dangerous work that General Carleton wants done. How is your adventurous blood running to-day?"

"One hundred per cent adventurous," Bert laughed.

Prescott turned, nodding to the staff officer.

"He ought to be the right one for the job," assented Anstey, after looking Bert over approvingly.

"I hope you'll suggest our names to the general commanding," Prescott continued.

"I will," nodded Anstey, "and I hope you get the chance."

"What is the chance?" Bert inquired, as Anstey mounted and rode away at a gallop.

"The chance," smiled Dick, "is to be taken and shot or hanged by the Germans as spies."

"Sounds good," commented Bert dryly.

"Are you ready for it?"

"I'm ready for anything of a soldierly nature as long as I last."

"Good!" glowed Prescott, patting the lad's shoulder appreciatively. "But here come Reade and Hazelton. Not a word of it to them. They're good and safe, but we've no right to talk about the general's plans."

"This inaction is getting on our nerves,"

grumbled Reade good-humoredly, as he and Hazelton joined the pair. "I thought you soldiers were always on the move in war time."

"You'll have action soon enough, I expect," returned Dick. "We hear to-day that the enemy is preparing to leave a force in Boston and move through the State, undoubtedly on the way to New York."

"I'm glad something is due to happen," grunted Reade.

"Lieutenant Prescott, sir," reported an orderly, coming up and saluting, "you're wanted on the telephone. Lieutenant Anstey, sir."

Dick hastened away to the nearby station of the military telephone. He recognized Anstey's voice over the wire.

"Old chap, I reported to General Carleton over the wire, and he is satisfied. You will bring Howard with you in time to report to General Carleton at nine this evening. You'll find him at the Robert Treat Paine house on the outskirts of Waltham, which is the general's present headquarters. Shall I send you a guide?"

"Thank you; if I couldn't find the way without a guide then I wouldn't be equal to the undertaking that is expected of me."

"At nine o'clock, then!"

"Yes, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Anstey."

Leaving the station Dick walked away whistling blithely, his face wreathed in smiles as though the chance of meeting death within a few hours afforded him the liveliest satisfaction. Returning to his friends, Dick thrust an arm through Howard's and drew him aside, saying:

"Reade and Hazelton, I know you'll excuse us. I have a matter of orders to discuss."

Bert, when he heard the news, was as delighted as the Regular had been.

"I hope I'll measure up to the job, whatever it is," Howard said fervently. "I don't mind the risk, but I don't want to make a mess of anything that will hurt Uncle Sam."

Together they went to report to Captain Follinsbee, who nodded and congratulated them on being ordered to headquarters for special work.

Mounted on troop horses, and followed by two of the Gridley boys to lead their mounts back, Dick and his young friend set out just before dark. A sharp canter, halting now and then to make inquiries of sentries, brought them to the Paine home before the hour appointed. Anstey, however, led them at once into the presence of General Carleton.

"It is important," began that old soldier, coming at once to the point, "to know just how much and what description of field artillery the Germans will bring to bear against us when they march out from Boston to go through the State. From a study of the map, and from some information turned in by aviators, it is assured that the enemy will move his artillery by two routes, one through Cambridge, and so on out to Waltham, and the other through Commonwealth Avenue to Newton. I require to know how many guns, and of what description, the enemy will move by each route. The guns that start by way of Commonwealth Avenue I have already arranged to cover. I already know, from air scouts, that guns are parked all along Cambridge Street in Boston. You two are to attempt to secure that information and bring it to me. Our outposts extend out to Waverly. Beyond, on the road to Boston, we have only occasional road patrols that do not go nearer Boston than Belmont. In Belmont a man named Hayward, a loyal American, has loaded a one-horse wagon with some of the finest garden truck. He has also painted a canvas tarpaulin with the legend: 'To the German commander, with the best wishes of the people of Belmont.' Mr. Prescott, in the next room you will find clothing in which you can

attire yourself as a farmer in his Sunday best. There is also suitable clothing for Cadet Captain Howard. Will you two undertake this dangerous mission of driving to Boston with the produce and attempting to find the German commander, leaving, if he permits, the vegetables with him and returning by Cambridge Street? You understand that you will go as spies, in disguise, and that if you are caught and suspected you will meet the fate of all spies in war."

Lieutenant Dick Prescott gladly promised to attempt the mission. Bert was so delighted that he could only nod.

"Do you wish us to go armed, sir?" Dick asked.

"You had better not. If weapons were found you would be at once adjudged either spies or dangerous characters. In either case you would be shot. Mr. Prescott, you will go, at midnight, to Belmont. I will furnish an orderly who will guide you on foot to Hayward. You will there take a short nap. Hayward will call you in season so that you can drive away in time to near the first German outpost at daylight. You will encounter a German outpost at West Cambridge."

General Carleton then added detailed instructions covering the nature of the informa-

tion that he wanted. After that Dick and Bert went into the next room, doffing their uniforms and putting on the disguises they were to wear on their attempted visit to Boston. After that there was time for some sleep. At midnight they left headquarters with their guide. Without incident they reached Hayward's house. Here they took another nap. Just at daylight Mr. Hayward called them, leading them to the loaded wagon, to which the horse was already hitched.

"Get up on the seat, small brother," laughed Dick.

"Good luck to you both!" cried Hayward, after directing Prescott as the road to be followed at the outset.

For some minutes they drove on at a slow jog. At last a turn in the road brought them in sight of a railway station in West Cambridge. Outside, two sentries paced stiffly, while a dozen more soldiers lounged about.

Curiously the sentries eyed the wagon until it drew up close. Then came a sharp challenge. Dick pulled up the horse promptly. The gray-clad soldier who had challenged them, and who had thrown his rifle forward, addressed them in German. Prescott shook his head. Bert looked on with admirable stupidity. There was calling back and forth among the soldiers,

then a smart-looking young Prussian officer came out of the station.

"Why do you try to cross our lines?" he asked, in excellent English.

"Why? Is it forbidden?" asked Dick, in pretended astonishment. "You see, sir, some of the folks in Belmont made up their minds they'd send your commander some fresh vegetables. They asked me to come in with them. They thought your general would appreciate the compliment. But if it's against the rules, I'll turn and drive back."

"Hm! You'll drive forward, instead," returned the lieutenant, after inspecting the vegetables. "One of my men will go on the wagon with you and ask Major Rheinhart to decide the matter."

At command a soldier sprang on the wagon at the rear.

"Go on," ordered the lieutenant. "Straight on. My man will halt you when you reach Major Rheinhart's quarters."

Dick drove on. Bert tried to look stupidly unconcerned. Both Americans knew that they were already in a ticklish position. They drove in past additional outposts, but not until they had entered Cambridge itself did the man behind them call to them and point to a small hotel.

Major Rheinhart came promptly out. He heard what the soldier had to say in German, then ordered Dick and Bert to dismount. Eyeing the two Americans, he said sharply:

“Attention!”

Caught off their guard for an instant, Dick and Bert obeyed promptly.

“Ha!” roared Major Rheinhart. “You obeyed too well. You are soldiers—therefore spies! You shall learn how the Germans treat spies!”

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE FIELD MARSHALL

AS it was almost bound to do, Major Rheinhart’s cunning had succeeded. It is next to impossible for the trained soldier to refuse to come to “attention” when sharply and unexpectedly ordered so to do.

Yet Prescott was not one to be caught napping. His presence of mind had brought him through more than one predicament. Hardly had he straightened up at “attention” when he instantly comprehended his error and slumped. As for Bert Howard, that youngster felt that there was no chance to recover, so he straight-

ened to an exaggerated extent, throwing his head well back.

"What's the matter, sir?" inquired Dick. "Didn't I do it right? I hain't seen German soldiers before, you know, so of course I hain't no idea how *they* give 'attention.'"

Purposely he spoke in ungrammatical English, while Bert, quick to take the cue, asked innocently and a bit stolidly:

"Ain't this the right way to do it, sir? I seen some American soldiers do it ~~this~~ way, I thought."

Though the major did not stop glaring, he looked at the young men curiously. Both fell back into round-shouldered poses. Dick bent at the knees, like one accustomed to much hoeing, while Bert turned his right foot over awkwardly. Certainly, at this moment, neither looked like a soldier.

"If you men are farmers," rapped out the major, "why are you taking vegetables to our commander-in-chief?"

"Because we figgered he'd like 'em. We know that fresh vegetables is one thing that ain't getting into Boston none these days, because the American soldiers keep 'em from coming in," Dick explained, with a half-cunning grin.

It was a fact that Boston was not receiving

garden truck, and the absence of such food bothered the German troops not a little.

“But why are Americans taking presents to the German commander?” insisted Major Rheinhardt. “Do you suddenly love the Germans?” His voice was incredulous, ironical.

“It ain’t jest that, of course,” Dick explained, straightening up, though doing it awkwardly. “But—well to tell you the truth—we know that the Germans are going to be boss here after this, and it don’t do no harm to cultivate good relations with the people who are going to run this side of the country. So the folks out Belmont way thought they’d try to show that they’re the kind of folks that can be reasonable, and they contributed to this load and asked us fellers to bring it in to show the commanding general that he’d find us Belmont folks reasonable kind of people.”

This was said with so much apparent candor that Major Rheinhardt found some of his suspicions slipping away for the moment. Yet he had been trained in the hard school of real war and he knew that an enemy people feel justified in all sorts of deceit and ruses in order to harass or defeat an enemy. So he eyed the pair keenly, aggressively.

“The folks back in Belmont will be mighty diserpointed if they hear that our present

wasn't appreciated," Dick declared plaintively.

Still continuing to look over the pair, Major Rheinhart did some rapid thinking.

"Since you want to see our commander-in-chief," spoke the German officer, at last, "there can be no harm, perhaps, in letting him decide your case for himself. I will send you to him, under guard, and he shall decide whether you are, as I believe, spies."

Walking away, leaving the American pair standing under the stolid gaze of several German soldiers, the major went into the building and spoke to a non-commissioned officer.

"Sergeant, you speak English excellently, and even understand the colloquial or slang English that some people in this country speak. I am going to send you in charge of the guard that will take yonder Americans to headquarters. You will not let it be discovered that you understand a word of English, but you will ride on the wagon and you will remember every word that these Americans may say to each other. You will make a report upon the same when you reach headquarters. But I will make out a report for you to turn in to the officer at headquarters."

Seating himself, Major Rheinhart rapidly typed his communication. The non-commissioned officer, in the meantime, had gone out-

side. When the officer came out he called, in German, for Sergeant Muller, to whom he gave orders in German. Saluting, Muller took four armed soldiers, stationing them, on foot, around the wagon. Then, saluting his officer, the sergeant gave the order, in German, to proceed. At a horse walk, the outfit went on, crossing the bridge and progressing into the city.

For the first two miles Dick said little and Bert hardly a word. Their limited talk related to the absence of usual crowds on the street. But at last they began to talk in earnest. Muller pricked up his ears.

"Say, if it wasn't serious, wouldn't it be a scream to take us for spies?" chuckled Howard softly. "I never did like soldiers, nor soldiering, and I'd hardly know a bass drum from a bum-shell. All I could tell folks to home would be that the Germans is in Boston, but I guess they know that already."

"I could tell a good German band, if I saw one," declared Dick. "I allers did like music, and I've hearn tell that the German army bands is the best in the world. That'll be one good thing, anyway, about having the Germans here. We'll hear a lot of good music. That'll go a long way with our people."

"Do you figger that there'll be any real business and good times, now that the Germans

are here?" Bert asked in a low tone of voice.

"Surest thing you know," Prescott answered promptly. "If the Germans are going to keep this side of the country they won't want to support us, will they? They'll want good business for their own sakes. We will have just as much money going around as if the Germans was all on the other side of the water. And I'll say this much for these folks—they allers have good government and good laws. If they don't rile our folks too much then our folks will soon like the German rule all right. But we better not talk too much about 'em, or these soldiers'll think we're sure enough spies."

"Huh! They don't know a word we're saying," scoffed Bert Howard lightly. "They don't know our lingo no better'n we know theirs. How much Dutch can you savvy? How much English do these men know? Some of their officers may talk English, but the common soldiers don't. Jest the same, mebbe we hadn't oughter talk too much. We don't wanter try to do the right thing, and then mebbe have 'em think we ain't straight and decent fellers who know how to mind our own business."

So after that Dick and Bert fell silent, save for an occasional word or two. Sergeant Muller had been taking industrious heed of their words and treasuring them all.

Along Cambridge Street and in Bowdoin Square the German artillery had been parked, and soon the two Americans were driving past it. The guns were carefully covered against the weather, but Prescott was soldier enough to know the calibre of the guns by the size and type of their wheels. An excellent judge of distances, Dick knew how many guns of a given type could be parked in a length of a quarter of a mile. A close student of military affairs, he knew the exact length of ammunition truck for any type of field gun. Naturally batteries of the same type were parked together. Types and accurate gauge of distance were all that this young Regular needed for his information. Where a green soldier would have had to count individually, this trained West Pointer, by the time that Bowdoin Square had been passed, had treasured up in his mind an accurate list of the German artillery he had seen.

Up Tremont Street and down School Street, to City Hall, the Americans were taken. It was in this municipal building that Field Marshall von Waller, German commander-in-chief, had taken his headquarters. He and his staff were quartered, for meals and lodging, in the Parker House and Young's Hotel.

Before the City Hall the wagon was halted. German soldiers on duty stared longingly at

10—1 *Conquest.*

the vegetables, as German soldiers at every street corner on the way had done. While the four soldiers of the escort stood stolidly on guard over the Americans, the sergeant approached the officer on duty at the entrance, showed him the report, and vanished inside.

Dick and Bert did not talk much, but they noted curiously, while appearing to be too stolid to note anything, the two companies of German infantry posted on the lawn. Two field guns were pointed down the street, flanked by four machine guns. Two more field guns and still another quartette of machine guns thrust their muzzles up the street. Even the alleyway at the side of the City Hall was dominated by two machine guns. There were others on the steps of the building. And everywhere were gray-clad soldiers, ready to leap forward and serve the guns. Plainly Field Marshall von Waller had no intention of allowing himself to be surprised by any Boston uprising.

Down on Washington Street, in the near distance, something like the usual throng of citizens could be seen on the move, for von Waller had sternly ordered that the normal business of the city should be resumed.

Ten minutes passed. Sergeant Muller and another non-commissioned officer came out, the

other sergeant giving orders in German. Obeying signs, Dick and Bert stepped down, following their conductor inside.

The German field marshall had not taken over the Mayor's office, but occupied another room. The Mayor still occupied his own office, keeping long hours, too, for the local government had been ordered to retain direction of local affairs, as far as German military rule permitted. Hence even the firemen, and the policemen in most sections, still remained on duty.

Field Marshall von Waller, white-haired, and apparently nearly seventy years old, was still florid, stout and unusually erect as he sat at his broad desk. As the Americans were taken into his presence he signed and handed papers to three young officers who hastened away.

"I will see the Americans now," announced von Waller, glancing toward them. Dick and Bert, caps in hand, looking as awkward as they knew how, and appearing to be a good deal frightened, stepped forward, making low bows.

"I am told that you brought me a wagonload of vegetables," said the commander-in-chief. "Why?"

"Because we believed vegetables to be good and scarce in Boston, and thought you'd like some such stuff," Dick answered.

"You thought I would be hungry?" asked the field marshal stiffly.

"No; but we and the folks 'round us figgered that you'd like a change of grub—food, I mean," Dick answered.

"It was very kind of you then," said von Waller dryly. "And you had no other motive?"

"Nothing except that we know the Germans have come to take charge here, and we figgered to show you that we Belmont folks can meet you half-way and be reasonable about what we cannot help."

"Then, at bottom, you do resent German occupation?"

"Of course we don't like it, General," Dick admitted.

"If your country had not been so unreasonable, this would not have happened," said the marshal, more amiably, and with an air of explanation. "But your people have followed a foolish doctrine named after a former president. You have paid no attention to the great need that European countries have of expansion. You wished us to remain cooped up within our own narrow borders, and that was impossible. You Americans have hitherto had so much room within your own borders that you have not felt the need of expanding into

South America, which is now in the possession of people who cannot make the best use of all the land and resources in South America. Therefore we Germans, among other Europeans, need much of the land and the resources there, that we may go on expanding and developing as we have to do. Your country interfered with us through the Monroe Doctrine; you did not want territory in South America, but you would not let us have any, either. Hence Germany was obliged to declare war on the United States. When we have brought you Americans to your senses, and have made you pay for the trouble to which you have put us, then we shall turn to Brazil, take what we need of that country, and go on there as we planned. It was good in you and your neighbors to show me courtesy to-day. I am touched by your kindness. I shall have the vegetables turned over to my head cook. Will you thank your neighbors for me, and accept my thanks? And tell them what I have told you of Germany's reasons for invading the United States."

"Then, General," Dick asked, "I take it that we are free to go back to Belmont?"

"That is not for me to say," replied the field marshall. "As you know, Major Rheinhart has reported his suspicions as to your motives in coming into Boston. I have forwarded the

major's report to Colonel Schroeder, who is in charge of this division of our service. You will be permitted to return to your homes unless Colonel Schroeder decides that you should be held. I will see if the colonel has decided."

CHAPTER XIV

A GERMAN DECISION

ALMOST instantly Colonel Schroeder answered the summons, halting near the desk and gravely saluting.

"Colonel," asked von Waller, "what about these two Americans?"

"Major Rheinhart suggests that they be held, excellency," returned the colonel. "From the speed with which they stood at 'attention' he suspects them of being soldiers and spies. For myself I do not think they look soldierly. As to their being spies, if they are such, then their errand was foolish, for there is really nothing in Boston that they can see if they return by the same route and go out beyond our lines. Therefore, I would suggest that they be permitted to return to Belmont. If they are innocent of spying we shall be served by showing the people of at least Belmont that the Germans are not unreasonable."

"Thank you, Colonel," assented Field Marshall von Waller, who then turned to the Americans to add: "You are free to return with your horse and wagon by the same route that you came. Again be good enough to accept my thanks to yourselves and your neighbors for the courtesy shown in the gift you have brought me."

Then the commander-in-chief did a thing astounding in one so august as himself. He extended his hand, shaking the hands of the Americans.

"I will go with you to the sidewalk," said Colonel Schroeder. He went with them to the wagon, motioning Sergeant Muller and the guard aside. The wagon was already empty, even of the tarpaulin.

"In accordance with the commander-in-chief's wishes you will not go back under guard," declared the colonel. "But you will go back exactly by the same route you took to reach here, and orders have been telephoned along the route to have you observed. You will not linger, nor do anything else improper, for you will be watched, and at the slightest indiscretion you will be taken from your wagon and shot. Our officers are very busy and we do not have time to hold many courts-martial," the colonel added significantly. "Take this paper

with you. It commends you to courtesy from sentries as long as you do nothing unwise."

"That's what I call white treatment," muttered Dick, as he turned the horse's head about. He spoke, of course, for the benefit of any German within hearing who might understand English.

Needless to say, both Americans felt wholly exultant as they realized that they were in a fair way to escape with their information. They had been obliged to tell a good many lies, something that neither would have done under any other conditions. Ever since men have fought it has been realized that spies must use deceit or fail and lose their lives.

Once they had turned into Tremont Street, and under cover of the noise of a passing trolley car, Prescott said quietly:

"Howard, see if you can look straight ahead and talk without opening your lips enough to be noticed—the way I am doing."

"This way?" asked Bert, making the attempt, and finding it easy.

"That's right," assented Dick. "My boy, if all turns out as well as things are running at present, we shall get out of town easily."

"But you had no chance to look at the parked guns."

"On the contrary, I shall be able to make a

full and accurate report, and I shall not be half a dozen guns from an actual count, either."

"I don't see how you did it," murmured Bert.

"After we are past the last German sentries, and have whipped up this horse to a gallop, I will tell you," Dick promised.

"But we are not yet past them, are we, Mr. Prescott? Nor can we feel in the least safe until we are in sight of our own lines."

"Whoa!" called Dick suddenly, and pulled up the horse. A German soldier, holding up his hand, had stepped into the street.

"Here," said Prescott, and held forward the paper supplied by Colonel Schroeder. The soldier scanned it attentively, then returned it, signing to the Americans to proceed.

Though Tremont Street showed a fair number of Americans on the sidewalks, Tremont Row appeared deserted. As before, there were few in Cambridge Street when they turned again into that thoroughfare. Here and there they were stopped, in dumb show by sentries, who silently inspected their pass, then as silently indicated permission to proceed. Again they passed the parked guns.

"Don't look at the guns at all," spoke Prescott, in his close-lipped way. "I'll manage it,

though, for I want to verify the count I made coming in.

So, looking away from the guns, Bert busied himself with studying the few citizens whom he saw on the opposite side of the street. They hurried along silently, barely looking at the gray-garbed soldiers of the enemy, yet always taking care to step around an immovable German. The Bostonians acted as though well cowed. They were not, but were sensible enough to know that no good could come of picking trouble with the conquerors of their city. The air of suppression was unmistakable.

At last the parked artillery had been passed. After several halts at the commands of sentries, the Americans again reached the bridge. On the other side, after driving some distance, they were halted at Major Rheinhardt's post. The major himself came out, the Americans alighting and holding forth their pass, which the officer scanned gravely.

"Colonel Schroeder is qualified to pass upon the matter," said Major Rheinhardt gruffly. "Proceed."

Lifting their caps, a courtesy which the officer ignored, the Americans set forward on their journey. By and by they were past the last German outpost, at which their pass had been taken from them. For a mile Dick drove on at

a walk, then suddenly started the horse into a trot, to be followed by a swift gallop.

Five minutes later they were halted by the first American mounted patrol. The lieutenant in command recognized Prescott and waved them on most heartily without asking questions. Inside the first stated outpost they found a car awaiting them. The horse was taken over to be returned to Mr. Hayward, while Dick and Bert were taken swiftly to General Carleton's headquarters in Waltham.

"You are back, Lieutenant Prescott," smiled General Carleton. "If I am any judge of facial expression you succeeded in your errand."

"Sir, I saw and spoke with Field Marshall von Waller. Further I saw and estimated the guns. In the section you ordered me to observe there are one thousand and sixteen pieces of light field artillery, three hundred and twenty-four pieces of heavy field artillery and three hundred and eighty howitzers. The supply trains comprise two trucks of ammunition for each gun. I base this report on estimate as to the length of the parks of artillery and of the supply trains. I am satisfied, sir, that I am not six guns out of the way of the exact number."

"Then your report, Lieutenant Prescott, is

of sufficient accuracy, and Cadet Captain Howard and yourself have my heartiest thanks for the duty you have discharged so well. Half an hour ago I received report on the guns parked along Commonwealth Avenue. My reason for wishing this information is that, knowing the exact numbers of the enemy's field artillery to be used when the Germans advance against us, I can also, with my knowledge of the lay of the land, figure, at any given point about where the batteries of the different types of guns will naturally be posted. Why I am so anxious to be able to judge just where these batteries will be posted you will discover later. Now, I am going to summon three of my engineer officers."

A minute later Colonel Wooten, Major Stickel and Captain Harding, all of the Engineer Corps of the United States Army, entered the room. They spread upon a long table a detailed map, in coarse scale, of the surrounding country. General Carleton went to the table and looked on, making suggestions as, with the figures provided, they figured out the probable positions of the different enemy batteries at each stage of the advance.

At length, after these problems had been worked out and indicated on the map, General Carleton said:

"Now, gentlemen of the Engineers, we know exactly the work that is before us."

"Exactly," bowed Colonel Wooten, while his two subordinates bowed.

Though at that moment Prescott and Bert Howard were much puzzled as to why their spy work of this morning had been of so much value, they were later to see the answer in visible form. Receiving General Carleton's repeated thanks, they then went to the adjoining room, doffing their disguises and resuming their uniforms and arms, after which, in a motor car, they were taken back to their posts at Arlington.

CHAPTER XV

HURLED INTO THE ENEMY'S FACE

"**P**RESCOTT," said Captain Follinsbee, "you are what I call a lucky chap."
"How so, Captain?" smiled the young West Pointer.

"I have an order to transmit to you, though it can be delayed for sixty seconds," Follinsbee continued. "First of all, Anstey of General Carleton's staff, runs across you, and then talks you up to the general."

"Anstey is a Virginian, and one of the nicest

fellows I ever knew," Dick answered. "He has always honored me with a good deal of his regard."

"So you were sent on some mission for the general," Follinsbee continued. "Your work must have pleased the general commanding, for I have here an order to transmit to you, and of course I have been apprised of the nature of the order."

He handed Dick an envelope, unsealed. The sheet inside contained orders for Lieutenant Richard Prescott, U. S. A., to report immediately to the general commanding for temporary staff duty.

"General Carleton has taken new headquarters, on the road between Belmont and Waltham," Captain Follinsbee continued. "I think you know the road. I have further orders. As Cadet Captain Howard and his troop have been in a measure under your supervision I will tell you that I have received orders to detach the troop from this battalion. It will report, within two hours, at headquarters for duty elsewhere on the line. As this transfer is doubtless an honor, I take it that it is in recognition of Howard's services when with you two days ago."

"If it means recognition of young Howard, I am delighted," Dick glowed. "The lad has shown splendid mettle."

"And I am glad for you, Prescott," said Follinsbee, holding out his hand. "How soon will you leave?"

"My orders state that a horse will be sent for me. I think I see a mounted orderly headed this way, and leading a mount."

"Then I'll hurry on to transmit the orders to Captain Howard," said Follinsbee, hastening away.

Almost instantly a bugle rang out in the cavalry camp. Horses at the picket line were hurriedly curried and saddles cinched on. Down came the shelter tents in a jiffy, half of each being added to the blanket roll of each young trooper. In fifteen minutes from the first bugle-call the troop was in saddle and moving down the road. Prescott, who had been watching, rode over to Bert's side at the head of the column.

"I'm off for temporary staff duty at headquarters," Dick informed the cadet officer.

"Then, if you're a staff officer, it will be indiscreet for me to inquire whether this transfer has been made on account of an impending fight."

"I don't know," Dick replied. "All I have is my orders. Whether General Carleton knows that the enemy is moving is more than I can say, but from here we can see that four

airships, Reade's among them, are up in the sky yonder, over the German advanced lines. They have been doing the same thing for three days. Even at night our air scouts hover over the enemy. We lost two airships yesterday, in brushes with the Germans."

"But they lost three flyers in getting our two," said Bert proudly. "So far, in the air, though we have not so many airships as the enemy has, we are doing better work. If we had superior numbers in airships we could have driven the German airships all to the ground."

Riding half a mile behind the advanced trenches, our friends did not see much of the other American soldiers until they reached General Carleton's headquarters in Belmont on the road to Waltham. Dick reported his arrival to the chief of staff. Immediately after, Captain Howard rode up, reporting the arrival of his troop. A field a hundred and fifty yards from headquarters was pointed out to him as the site on which his troop was to camp.

"You are not on trench duty for the present," added the chief of staff. "You will maintain a guard of four sentry posts about your camp, but will have no concern with the general guard. You are to await orders."

Life in camp that night was uneventful. At

nine o'clock taps sounded, and the guard had orders that reveille was to be sounded at daylight. That reveille, however, was not heard. Instead, before three o'clock in the morning, the notes of general alarm were heard the entire length of miles at the American front.

The Germans were advancing. Five minutes before, signal lights from the air scouts had sent in word that the enemy was in motion on the roads leading from the suburbs of Boston. By the time that the soldiers tumbled out of their shelter tents the loud whirring of rising American airships was in the air everywhere. Our air fleet was going out to meet the enemy air fleet and to observe the enemy on the ground.

Along the length of the line the military telephones were busy. Generals commanding divisions received their orders from field headquarters. Generals commanding brigades received transmitted orders from division headquarters. Corps, division and brigade staff officers rode here and there through the darkness, carrying orders that General Carleton had elaborated days before.

In the darkness, all along the line, small faggot fires were started, as soon as the soldiers had struck their tents and folded them with their blanket rolls. Over these fires coffee

11—1 *Conquest.*

was boiled and bacon fried. The reports signaled in from the air scouts at the front told the commanders just how long their men probably had for breakfast. Daylight did not come until after the men had been fed; soldiers always fight better when they have been fed. While it was still dark, regiments or battalions that were not already in place were marched to their positions. As the first streaks of dawn appeared over Boston the American soldier was ready, waiting for his grim work.

Even before daylight German aircraft had been sighted flying over the American lines. Wherever it was possible, an American airship flew at some German craft, the machine guns on both barking angrily. Over their own lines German flyers attacked American flyers. These lofty scouts were savage fighters.

"Captain Howard!" called Dick Prescott, riding up at a gallop.

"Here, sir!"

"You will mount your troop, ride to a point two hundred yards south of the commanding general's staff, and there take station until further orders. You will dismount your men, or keep them in saddle, at your discretion, but in the absence of further orders you may let your men remain out of ranks."

Salutes were exchanged, and Prescott rode

away. Bugle calls rang out snappily, after which the cadet captain led his command to the designated spot and halted.

"Do you think it possible that we've been detailed for bodyguard duty to General Carleton?" asked Joe Wright, riding up beside his chief.

"We're in position for it, anyway," Bert rejoined. "Only time can show us our real duties."

Miles away the booming of heavy guns sounded.

"The concert has started," muttered Joe, and a few seconds later shells fell well behind the American line, driving up geysers of dirt.

"That must be just to show us that they have all the range they need," said Bert dryly. "Yet we knew that before."

Catching young Howard's eye, Lieutenant Anstey signaled the cadet an invitation to ride over to the staff. By a gesture Bert inquired whether he was to come alone or to march the troop there. "Alone," was Anstey's signaled answer.

"I thought you might like to be here," said Anstey, "and I received permission to invite you. Our observation tower is about to be raised, and we shall soon have news. There it goes!"

Somewhat after the design of the water tower of a fire department, the observation tower was slowly extended skyward, then made secure, two companies of soldiers aiding in the work. Up the ladder at the rear of the slim tower Staff Captain Sidney raced, until he reached the tiny platform ninety feet in the air. He rapidly focused a powerful telescope, taking swift, sweeping views of the country ahead.

For half an hour shells from the larger German guns continued to fall. All too soon the range of the enemy gunners proved to be exact, and havoc was worked among the soldiers at the line. Captain Sidney remained aloft on the tower, never ceasing to seek for news of the enemy's movements.

Just below the captain stood a soldier of the signal corps, two signal flags in hand. Underneath him, on the ladder, stood another soldier with pencil and pad, prepared to write whatever was dictated to him.

"Air scout reports that enemy infantry is moving in force along road out of Cambridge," called down the signalman.

"Tell him to hang on and send us as exact reports as possible," called up the chief of staff, and the signal flag wig-wagged rather busily.

From a point of concealment half a mile behind the American staff, Uncle Sam's larger artillery pieces now spoke along the entire line. Captain Sidney observed and reported on all the shell hits he could make out.

"German infantry has halted, and is intrenching," he reported. "Shells have done some havoc among the enemy's men."

Ten minutes later the air scouts over the roads from Boston to Belmont did some vigorous signaling. Even before Sidney could discover the cause the signalman reported that German cavalry was being pushed forward. At last Sidney's telescope put him in touch with the situation.

"Enemy infantry has stopped intrenching," he reported. "Enemy cavalry screens, in open order, have been pushed out beyond infantry and are moving this way. Air scout dead ahead reports——"

That was the last word Captain Sidney ever uttered. Screeching through the air a five-inch shell struck the upper tower, killing the captain instantly and blowing his body to small bits. The tower toppled, the signalman being caught and killed in the crashing ruins. The soldier underneath him was hauled out of the débris, alive but crushed and torn beyond recognition. Half a dozen soldiers back of the tower were

so badly wounded that a prompt call was sent for an ambulance.

Calling three staff officers to him, General Carleton rapidly dictated orders. Then the military telephones came into play. Hardly had the swift orders been sent than signalmen all along the line began to reel in the telephone wires. Prescott, at a signal, reported to General Carleton, receiving his orders, saluting, and riding over to Bert Howard.

"Captain, you will head our troop, and follow me," said Dick briefly.

A train that had been held in waiting was now quickly loaded with telephone and other military supplies. Hundreds of men did the work on the jump. Sounding its whistle, the locomotive began to haul the train west. General Carleton started toward Waltham, riding at a trot, his staff keeping with him. A troop of Regular cavalry followed the staff, while two companies of infantry moved along the same road at a double quick.

Bert Howard went swiftly to the head of his troop. Brisk commands blared out on the bugle. Prescott rode down the road, and Bert started in his wake, followed by the troop.

A mile away a signal corps man, standing beside a tree, stepped out and saluted Dick Prescott, halting him. On the tree a field telephone

had been placed. Prescott stopped, dismounted, rang up and listened.

"You are to remain here, Captain," he told Bert, as the head of the troop came up. "That is the only order at present."

Remounting, Dick dashed away at a gallop, disappearing under the trees at the right. Presently he recrossed the road at the left. Then he came back, again going to the telephone and calling up. Two minutes later he mounted, riding over to the Gridley boy.

"Captain Howard, to your right are two troops of Regular cavalry, on your left a troop of Massachusetts National Guardsmen. Deploy under cover and wait orders to charge the approaching German cavalry!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE YANKEE TRICK IN THE HILLS

EVEN before he gave his troop the order to deploy, Bert ordered that carbines be kept in their boots.

"When we charge," he announced, "it will be with saber and automatic revolvers. If we come to close quarters with the enemy, do not fire too rapidly. Keep cool and make every

shot count. That is your surest hope of success. And keep steady, men. Do not feel that you are riding to destruction. Our small share in the coming maneuver has been thought out by a commander who knows our exact strength and powers. No matter what happens, be alert for orders and obey them the instant they are heard."

The troop was then deployed, moved forward a few yards and good cover on either side of the road was sought.

"Wright," ordered Bert, "cross the road to the other platoon and await the bugle signal, though I may send the order by saber signal."

Joe got across the road without being seen, though the steady hoofbeat of the enemy cavalry could already be heard. Hearing a sound beside him, Bert turned to discover Prescott joining him.

"I'll give you the order to start," Prescott stated. "You'll rush forward with a volley of cheers, and that will be the signal to the three other troops to rush in. Do you feel shaky, Captain?"

"No; only anxious, sir—anxious to deliver a really telling blow."

"You will not retreat until you are forced to do so, or until ordered," Prescott continued. "If you can drive the enemy back a quarter of

a mile you will be in the open, where I can watch you."

In the woods behind them three shells exploded, making some of the horses restless.

"The Germans must know pretty well where their cavalry are," Dick muttered, "or else von Waller is reckless about the lives of his own men."

Suddenly Dick caught a flash of gray through the trees. For a moment or two he peered anxiously, then said:

"Go ahead, Captain Howard!"

Bert's saber flashed the signal. Joe's blade responded. With a tumultuous yell the Gridley boys dashed forward, closing up the gap on the road. In line of skirmishers the young troopers sprang out from cover, spurring their horses on as they yelled, their sabers glinting as they went ahead into the sunlight.

Though plainly surprised, the Germans did not slacken speed. Amid hoarse yelling the two galloping lines came in touch, steel flying in hubbub and clash. Now both cavalry commands were obliged to halt.

Clash, clash, clash! Clatter, jangle! Streaming with blood, men went down from emptied saddles. Riderless horses plunged madly on. At Bert's signal with his left hand the firing with the automatics began. Firearms at such

short range meant wholesale killing and wounding. The Germans, too, were firing now. Howard's revolver brought a German officer low. Wright sabered another. He and Bert went after the two other officers of this part of the enemy cavalry screen. Howard shot one of them, Joe the other, and this without pre-arranged plan.

The whole shock of the surprise had been great. The advantage rested with the Gridley boys. Bert, who had been anxious lest some of his men shrink at the touch of cold steel, now exulted in his young Gridley troopers.

"Hurrah!" Gridley pressed forward, a flying wall of flashing steel, for the Germans before them, officerless, and fearing further ambush in the woods, had turned and were dashing back—in good order, but pursued by the gleeful youngsters. Twice some of the enemy cavalymen turned, trying to make a stand, but each time several of these were cut down or shot. Instead of dreading the contact, the Gridley boys were so anxious to press forward that Bert and Joe, aided by three sergeants, were forced to use all their exertions to keep some of the fellows from getting ahead of the line.

Half a mile back the cavalry were driven, until the Gridley boys caught glimpse of Ger-

man infantry masses approaching along the road. Prescott, who, unnoticed, had ridden along behind, now dashed forward at a mad gallop, signaling Bert to face about and gallop back. At the same time Dick's sword flashed the same signal to the other three troops engaged.

At the first note of the bugle Howard and Wright dashed through their own line, waving their troopers about. The facing was executed in good order.

"Gallop!" pealed the bugle.

Taking heart from the fleeing of the Americans, the Germans now halted, facing about and coming on at a trot. But they did not pursue under the trees. Plainly they feared to run into an infantry ambuscade trap at this point. Halting the instant he was under the shadow of the trees, Howard faced his men about, meeting the enemy with several carbine volleys.

"Cease firing," shouted Dick, as the German riders once more retreated. "We have broken the screen at this point of the line. The German infantry will have to take a hand now."

Brilliant as the dash had been, Bert's troopers had brought back with them three dead Gridley boys. Nine wounded, needing ambulance help were also with the troop. A score

had been so slightly wounded as to be able to remain on duty in saddle.

Having ridden off to the temporary telephone, Prescott made his report. Turning from the instrument, he nodded to the signal men to take down the telephone and to rush the wire westward.

“Captain Howard, despatch two of your men north and south to carry orders to the other cavalry troops to fall back on Waltham, and report at the Common in Waltham. I will go with this troop.”

As they left, Uncle Sam’s boys had a glimpse of dense masses of enemy infantry advancing. The German cavalry had vanished for the time being. There being no orders to fight at this point, Bert had the order sounded to march at a trot.

“That was your first real brush with the sabers,” smiled Dick, as the troop swept along. “I was glad to see your youngsters take to it so well. Of course they’ve been drilled in the use of the saber, but troopers always find the first real clash different from drill. Howard, I would say that you did as well as the Regular cavalry. Didn’t you think so—honestly?”

“It is only from your telling me,” laughed Captain Bert, “that I know there was any cavalry there besides this troop. I kept my gaze

ahead every second, and didn't see the work of any other troop."

With the last of the American troops in full retreat, the Germans had ceased firing. Overhead the German airships whirled noisily back and forth, following the retreating forces all the way to Waltham. In this city a committee of leading citizens had already interviewed General Carleton, seeking to learn if it would not be possible to make a stand there. But the commander-in-chief had shaken his head and pressed on over the two roads leading to Lincoln and Weston. He wished with all his heart to get the enemy up into the hills.

Local telephone lines were being used here by the military, box relay outfits having been made fast to the overhead wires at frequent points. Prescott received, from Lincoln way, telephoned orders that the Gridley and other cavalry troops should now proceed at a walk unless overtaken by the enemy. Two wagonloads of signal corps men and six of Engineers here joined the cavalry, at the head of which rode the Gridley troop. This force being the rear-guard of the American forces at this part of the line, the signal corps men climbed telephone poles, clipping the wires into short length, the Engineers placing charges afterwards at the feet of the poles and blowing the

long timbers out of the ground that the enemy might not be able to use this material. At every mile Prescott, riding well ahead, reported for orders.

"I believe that our stand will be made on a line passing through Concord," Dick confided to Bert as they rode through the little town of Lincoln.

Behind, a trail of German havoc was gradually widening. The great cotton mills at Waltham had been sadly damaged by a dozen heavy shells that had struck the buildings. The watch factory had escaped damage until the German staff and troops passed through that town. In storage buildings on the grounds of that plant had been a lot of machinery used for making time fuses for the Allies during the European War. The invaders had counted on seizing this fuse machinery and making Waltham a center for manufacture of their own artillery ammunition. This special machinery had been ordered loaded on cars on the railway across the river, but the Germans arrived before the last of it had been taken out of storage. A foreman at the watch factory had accordingly blown up the store houses, destroying the rest of the machinery. Ten minutes later every building of the company had been blown up by German sappers, and the city of Waltham had been set

afire. The Watertown Arsenal had been discovered dismantled, and nothing had been done about that, for it was dangerous to destroy private plants useful to the invaders!

Over in Newton much damage had been done by dropping shells. At a dozen points in the city, fires had been started by exploding missiles, and now scores of residences were in flames. The dropping of eight shells had completely wrecked the Technical High School building, now a mere mass of broken, piled-up masonry.

Prescott's surmise of a stand being attempted at Concord proved to be baseless. As many military units as possible had been hurried westward on railway trains and trolley cars that were being withdrawn from the zone of German power. Automobiles carried thousands of other troops. The soldiers who had to march became sorely fatigued at last. Cavalry horses began to droop, but Prescott received 'phoned orders to keep on toward Ayer Junction.

It was east of Ayer Junction, however, about the middle of the afternoon, that Prescott and the cavalry came upon the sight of trenches ahead. The roads were still open beyond the trenches. Civilian labor had again been at work here. Thousands of toiling men, working

for several days past, had constructed solid, bomb-proof trenches. Six hundred yards east of the trenches, began systems of complicated barbed wire entanglements reaching to within two hundred yards of the trenches.

"This ought to give the Germans pause," muttered Dick, studying the entanglements as he walked his horse past them on the road. No sooner had the cavalry and the service wagons passed rearward of the trenches than hundreds of soldiers leaped out to complete the entanglement systems across the road.

Once behind the trenches Bert Howard received orders to rest his troop in support behind the trench line. He gave orders that the animals be allowed to rest for an hour, then were to be groomed thoroughly. Horses dropped to the ground as soon as saddles and bridles had been removed. As soon as they had time the Gridley boys also threw themselves flat on the ground to rest. They had been fighting and traveling since daylight on this summer's day.

Prescott returned to the headquarters staff, nearby. Anstey, looking as fresh as though he had made the trip in a Pullman car, came over to talk to his friend.

"The air scouts report that the Germans halted just west of Waltham, but have now got

in motion again," he informed Dick. "They will find the hills tougher than the Boston-Waltham road."

"I know that we did," grimaced Dick.

Overhead American and German flyers were circling, diving, rising, blazing away at one another with frequent machine gunfire. But the German aviators, though harassed, were able to signal back to their own forces the locations and ranges. These busy air craft were so many extra, straight-seeing eyes of Field Marshall von Waller.

The Gridley troop horses had been groomed, picketed and were feeding at five o'clock when a series of sullen blasts miles away proclaimed that the German long-range heavy artillery was again going into action.

Bert was seated on the ground, his back against a tree, dozing, when Lieutenant Prescott rode over to him.

"Captain Howard, I have just come from General Carleton, and he invites you to join the headquarters crowd for a little while. He even promises that you may learn why you and I were sent on that mission the other day."

Another military tower had been erected on the highest rise of ground in the neighborhood. General Carleton and members of his staff were now grouped around the base of the

tower. Catching the commander's eye the Gridley boy saluted, but knew better than to speak at such a moment. It was the general who beckoned Dick and the cadet to his side, to say pleasantly:

"When you two gentlemen and certain others brought me information the other day as to the numbers and kinds of German artillery parked on the Boston roads leading out this way you did me excellent service. Knowing the numbers and kinds of enemy field guns, and knowing that I intended making my first serious stand here, I was able to lay out on the map the probable hills and rises of ground on which the guns would be posted and the hollows in which the enemy howitzers would be placed. Our air scouts are reporting that, in most instances, batteries are being posted or have been posted in the positions that members of my staff helped me to guess on the map. Not all of the batteries are yet posted; the enemy are still bringing batteries into position. I shall wait as long as I dare for reports from the air scouts before carrying out my plans."

That more and more German guns were being posted was soon evident. The scene around headquarters was gruesome in the extreme. Though Uncle Sam's men crawled into the bomb-proofs, hundreds of shells were soon

bursting in small given areas. Despite the excellence of the trenches hospital men were kept busy as stretcher bearers. The dead were left to be carried away last of all.

"I can hardly wait longer!" General Carleton was heard to mutter to himself. "Yet I must. Not all of the enemy batteries have been posted."

Shortly before six, checking off on the marked map the reports sent in by the distant aviators' wig-wagging flags, General Carleton at last exclaimed huskily:

"Now, gentlemen, I call upon you to note what happens!"

Then to a man up on the tower he roared:

"Fly the special red flag!"

From a halyard near the top of the slender tower an oblong sheet of coarse red bunting was broken out. Not more than five seconds later a series of dull, explosive roars, miles away was heard. These noises were a great deal louder than the discharges of the enemy's heavy guns had been. Then followed other series of explosions.

"Gentlemen," inquired General Carleton, a strange light in his eyes, "do you note that the enemy shell fire has nearly ceased so far as we can observe at this point?"

Several wondering officers nodded assent.

Other staff officers who knew the answer to the riddle, but had not divulged their information beforehand, displayed countenances that reflected some of the strange light in the commander's eyes.

"Gentlemen," General Carleton continued, "when I knew the exact numbers, calibers and types of the artillery that von Waller intended to move out against us, I was able to judge the most likely points at which the various enemy batteries were to be posted. The guesses must have been good ones. When the red flag was flown, the waiting, watching engineer and ordnance officers sent the electric sparks traveling along underground wires to the suspected battery points. Gentlemen, a few days ago every one of these suspected points was heavily mined and connected with this place by underground electric wires. The enemy batteries, or a large proportion of them, have been destroyed!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE DASH IN THE NIGHT

AND, indeed, it proved to be so. At greatest risk American air scouts ascertained and reported facts indicating that at least sixty per cent of the German artillery lately in action had been destroyed by the explosion of mines under their positions.

Guns, gunners and much ammunition had been hurled into chaos. Staff officers and infantry supports had furnished many casualties. Not all at once did reliable reports reach the American lines, but in that series of mine explosions the invaders lost fully three thousand men killed and at least three times that number were injured too seriously to resume military duty.

The laying and firing of the mines was an act within the limits of recognized warfare, but that did not make the German army take to it any more kindly. Rage quivered within the breasts of the enemy, causing a keen desire to even matters at the earliest date.

To the Americans the advantage was considerable. It reduced, for a while, the deadliness of the German artillery fire, though the

enemy was still superior both in range and number of guns, nor was it long before other German batteries were sent from Boston.

"We'll teach the enemy a few more things, if we last long enough," General Carleton was heard to murmur to one of his ranking staff officers. If the victorious Germans felt the rankling of hatred, the American fighting men were desperate.

The most immediate effect of the disaster to the Germans was to cause a cessation of hostilities during the little that was left of daylight. Advised by their air scouts of the existence of the wire entanglements, the enemy did not attempt a night attack against the present American position. By nightfall General Carleton had thrown out numerous patrols and scouting parties, keeping in close touch with the enemy. Thus it came to the American commander's knowledge that the enemy was attempting extensive flanking operations to the northward. The grizzled old American leader smiled grimly when he heard the news. While close watch was kept on the American right flanks, increased patrols were sent out to the northward.

During the night the noise of more discharging mines came to the American position, though few of the sleeping soldiers were awak-

ened by it. Two brigades of the enemy had been caught on mined roads, and the resulting explosion of mines had cost the enemy nearly a thousand men in killed and wounded. After that von Waller was content to wait until daylight for his further movements. Soon after daylight, however, German field guns opened fire briskly all along the line. American field guns answered. Still under cover of their gunfire the invaders advanced in masses. Despite severe losses from infantry fire, the Germans advanced until close to the first of the wire entanglements. Here they halted, throwing themselves flat and burrowing themselves into the ground with intrenching tools. Though the American field guns raked them mercilessly, the enemy hung on, firing fiercely.

Intrenched, at last, the Germans fired indifferently after that, employing their infantry only when the American field gun fire forced them to retaliate. Von Waller's plan was plain. He was waiting for nightfall, when he would throw many of his men forward to cut the maze of barbed wire. General Carleton smiled to himself as he divined the plan.

Just after dark it was discovered that the enemy was moving forward upon the first of the wire entanglements. Suddenly lines of fire ran down from the American trenches. In a

jiffy the fire had reached tiny holes in the upper sides of continuous lines of iron pipe running through the farther side of the entanglements. Petroleum had been turned into these pipes, escaping at the vents. Thousands and thousands of little jets of burning fire threw an illumining glare over the scene. Up in the darkened American trenches the infantry could see and fire upon the Germans who had been detailed to the duty of wire cutting. The cutters furnished excellent marks, and soon were compelled to beat a retreat. As the blazing oil escaped, it ran over the ground, still burning, until there was a solid wall of fire on the enemy's side of the entanglements.

General Carleton and his staff, who had been called, rode along the rear of the American line for at least two miles, watching the effect of the trap. The American infantry profited to the utmost by the chance afforded its sharpshooters.

Not until daylight did the Americans cease feeding petroleum into the pipes. With the first streaks of light the artillery duel was resumed, the Germans firing with great rapidity, the Americans with deliberation. The supply of shells for Uncle Sam's guns was beginning to run low, and care must be exercised.

By breakfast time General Carleton knew,

from his air scouts, that more heavy columns of enemy troops were leaving Boston. For nearly two hours reports that came in showed the reinforcements for the invaders to be marching toward the present German position. Then these oncoming columns obliques toward the southwest. Later in the day it became plain that the enemy intended to march toward Connecticut, going many miles below the right flank of the American line. One detachment of Germans, two thousand strong, on motorcycles, actually passed within a short distance of the right flank of the home army. By nightfall General Carleton was convinced that he must abandon the present position or find his line of retreat cut off by a strong enemy force. So, just after dark, the evacuation of the American positions began. Within fifteen minutes the movement had been reported to the enemy before the entanglements. Half an hour later the Germans waited, then moved forward upon the entanglements, cutting them and at the same time silencing the feeble American rear guard left behind to hold the trenches as long as possible.

In a short time the American retreat had become complete and swift, though it did not resemble a rout. By the time that the Germans had cut the entanglements the American army

had had a six-mile start. The final pursuit was carried on briskly by the Germans, who sent large forces of cavalry ahead.

The Gridley boys—what were left of them—constituted the sixth and last troop of cavalry that accompanied headquarters along the main road of the march. Prescott rode back with orders.

“Captain Howard,” he announced, “you will fall out at the roadside until General Smith’s brigade reaches this point. Then you will report to General Smith and remain under his orders until relieved for other duty.”

Bert promptly debouched his men into a field, halting them. As he did so, he observed that the troop of cavalry ahead, a National Guard outfit from eastern Connecticut, had also left the column and defiled from the road.

Five minutes later the head of Smith’s brigade arrived. Prescott delivered written orders to the brigade commander, then rode forward. General Smith sent for the two cavalry captains.

“Gentlemen,” said General Smith briskly, “you will take positions behind these trees, at each side of the road. At the outset you will keep to your respective sides of the road. You will each station Cossack posts ahead of you toward the enemy, and at a distance of two hun-

dred yards from your positions. These pickets will observe absolute quiet until the head of the German cavalry column is not more than three hundred yards away. Then the pickets will open fire upon the enemy. You will ride forward at a gallop to support the pickets. As soon as you have picked up your pickets you will sound the charge. You will come in contact with the enemy, fighting him at your discretion, but not more than two minutes at the most. You will then retreat swiftly and in good order. As soon as possible you will both return to the road and keep on as fast as you can travel. Gentlemen, this will be serious work, for when you once start to ride away from the enemy, you must ride—not fire—and you are likely to have serious losses before you get away from the enemy. But I know you will not fail me—you will not fail your country.”

“My troop won’t fail you, sir, unless we have the misfortune to be wiped out,” Bert Howard gravely informed General Smith.

“My troop will neither fail nor be wholly wiped out,” promised the National Guard captain.

Thanking them, and giving final instructions, General Smith rode at a canter to regain the head of his marching brigade.

Before the brigade had moved on Captain

Bert had stationed his Cossack posts and had ordered his remaining men under cover. When Smith's brigade had passed, a long motor truck train went by, then two batteries of field artillery, and last of all a regiment of the rear guard. In the darkness of the night these moving bodies of men looked uncanny.

A long time followed before the tramp of hundreds of horses was heard. Then it came nearer and nearer. Bert listened with Captain Chalmers, his comrade on the other side of the road. They had met to hold watch and council together.

"This task of ours rises to the dignity of a real sporting proposition," remarked Chalmers, a man of forty. "We are left at the rear of the army to engage a foe of unknown strength. It is a puzzle, isn't it, Captain Howard, that we are to attack? Yet we may retreat as soon as we wish, and, having started we are to keep on until we have escaped pursuit. It's a strange order. I can't understand it."

"I've followed a few such orders already, sir," smiled Bert. "At the time, I couldn't see anything in them, but later I've found that some one with a barrel of brains to my teaspoonful knew just what he was doing in giving the order. But—hark!"

Hoofbeats were coming much nearer. Crack!

crack! crack! Our own pickets had begun to fire. Both cavalry commanders raced to their commands, giving the forward orders. The Cossack posts, returning, fell in with their main bodies, wheeled and went forward once more.

“Charge!” sounded the bugles. The two troops raced forward into the darkness—and what else?

CHAPTER XVIII

BERT CLAIMS A GERMAN FOR HIS OWN

IN the dark the charge was grisly work. The Germans, though taken by surprise, promptly charged, too. A cadet troop and a National Guard troop had attacked the head of one of the best Uhlan regiments in the German army.

There was a clash of steel, a sputter of fire as the two forces came together. Men were unhorsed and trampled.

Bert Howard had not drawn his saber. His left hand clutched the bridle while his right gripped an automatic revolver. He did not want to fight personally, but to give his whole attention to his troop, and to prevent it from being wiped out of existence.

After the first spurt forward, the enemy yielded slightly. It was only a ruse, however, to draw the Americans on into greater rashness, for the major at the head of the Uhlans had discovered at once how weak the opposing force was.

“Draw revolvers! Fire! Rapidly!” That was the command that Bert’s trumpeter, sticking close to him, sounded above the noise of the melee.

For a few moments the enemy actually weakened before the withering blast of fire, for the National Guard troop had also begun to fire. Then, all in an instant, the bugle sounded a new command to face about. Wheeling, riding like the wind, the Gridley troopers started in swift flight. Nor was it a moment too soon, for the National Guard troop had already started to go back.

“Gallop!” sounded the call of two American bugles. As they rode, the flankers joined the main body of cavalry. The Connecticut troop in the lead, both fell into column of fours, and, close though their formation was, the American troopers rode as though for dear life. Nor could the Germans travel as fast, and for a very simple reason. Moving through the enemy’s country the Uhlans realized the need of traveling with flankers. These flankers,

spread through the woods on each side, could not move at a gallop. Their necessarily slow speed hindered the speed of the main column of the regiment.

At last, finding that the audacious Americans were easily escaping him, the German colonel reluctantly gave the order to call in the flankers. In a narrower, more compact mass, the Uhlans now moved only along the road. Yelling at the tops of their voices the Uhlans, stung by the impudence of the American attack, rode hard in the effort to overtake them.

A mile down the road Prescott, sitting his horse, suddenly spurred forward so as to speak to Chalmers.

"You need not ride so hard now, Captain," Dick called across to the Guardsman. "You may walk your horses, if you wish. Listen!"

Almost in the same instant the sound for which Prescott had prepared Chalmers rapped forth. It was the sharp, jerky crackle of some four thousand Springfield rifles. Smith's brigade, ambushed along the right hand side of the road, was firing into the Uhlans almost at arm's length.

In the dark that surprise was complete. Caught in a trap, the Germans were not dismayed, but fought valiantly against overwhelming odds.

"Now, perhaps you understand why you were sent to rush at the enemy, then run away from them," smiled Prescott, as he rode down the line to Howard after Captain Chalmers had ordered a brief halt. "Your swift race to get away brought all the enemy into the road, and now General Smith is making them regret that they ever left home. But some of the Uhlans may survive and try a forward dash to get away. While you remain here, Howard, you will do as well to throw your men in line across the road, flanking into the woods."

Captain Bert, promptly following the suggestion, was glad within two minutes that he had done so. A score of Uhlans, escaping the ambush, came on at a mad run.

"Don't use your carbines, men, or you might hit some of Smith's men," Bert called. "Automatics. Open fire whenever you find a man close enough to you."

At the first fire half a dozen Uhlans dropped. The Germans, too, began to fire, though some of them trusted to the saber. A young German lieutenant, trusting to his swinging blade, and flanked by two troopers, rode straight down the road at the center of the Gridley line. Smash! they went through, bowling over three Gridley mounts and riders. Swish! Bert's saber was already in the air. He closed with the young

lieutenant. Prescott, wearing only a narrow infantry rapier, did not trust to steel, but his automatic was in his hand like a flash. A single shot, and he had stopped the Uhlan who swung at him.

Clash! clash! 'As the remaining Uhlan troopers got past, riding down the road and to destruction at the hands of Chalmers' men, Bert closed with the lieutenant.

Both were young, full of fire, of unlimited ardor and grit. Clash, clash! Steel drew fire from steel. Prescott, who had turned his automatic toward the lieutenant, saw that it was a duel, and, with the chivalry of war, let his revolver hand drop to his side. Slash! clash! jab! Maneuvering their horses with speed and care, each bending forward, reaching out with steel for the other's head, Uhlan and Gridley boy fought on with all the zeal of aroused youth. Clang! flash! Sparks were flying fast. Not even for an instant did the Uhlan lieutenant waver when the point of Bert's saber cut a gash in his cheek. Again the sabers jangled and rang as the two men, riding about each other, struck and lunged again and again. The remainder of the Uhlan fugitives were now down, dead or wounded, and the Gridley troopers had time to watch the equal conflict, making room for the two duelists whenever neces-

sary. Lunge! slash! cut! Bert Howard realized that he was panting, but his arm felt as tough as ever. He aimed full at the Uhlan's neck. The lieutenant countered, but the force of Howard's gliding weapon was expended across the horse's chest. Quivering, snorting, the horse reared. Howard stayed his sword, but the Uhlan horse slipped and fell. The lieutenant sprang to his feet, turning with undiminished courage to the now unequal conflict.

"One moment, sir!" shouted Bert. Reining up, he leaped from saddle, clear of his horse.

"Equal terms again!" called Bert, throwing his saber up to guard.

"Thank you!" came politely from the young Uhlan officer. Again their blades met, throwing sparks and quivering. Around each other they danced, both seeking for openings. Clang! snap! clatter! The Uhlan officer's blade had been broken near the hilt, and the German was at Howard's mercy.

"Take my saber, one of you!" called Bert, to his nearest troopers. Then, with a bow, he added to the Uhlan, who had drawn himself up and stood with folded arms:

"This must be on equal terms, sir. Do you fight with fists?"

For an instant the young Uhlan stirred as though he would accept. Then he bowed,



Bert Closed With the German Lieutenant.

his lips parting in a smile, as he answered:

"And why? It would be more graceful for me to admit that I have met my match and am fairly vanquished. I am at your orders, sir."

Just two seconds later their hands met. American and German, patriot and invader, were officers and gentlemen! They understood each other.

"I regret very much, sir," Bert added, while his hand still gripped the other's, "that I must inconvenience you. It is war, and I must consider you a prisoner. I am Cadet Captain Howard."

"And I am Lieutenant von Schiller. I beg you, sir, to feel no concern over the fact that the lot of war has fallen to me. Will one of your men be good enough to catch and bring my horse to me?"

The horse, which had already been caught, was led up. Von Schiller looked at the cut on his mount's chest with some concern, then, from a side pouch the Uhlan brought forth court plaster and secured it over the wound.

"I must not waste more of your time, Captain Howard. Here is my revolver, the only weapon I have left."

Bert gravely received the weapon and belt, passing them to one of his troopers.

"Private Dawson, you will take these, and you will also ride with the lieutenant as his guard until you are able to turn him over as a prisoner of war. Lieutenant, I shall trust to meeting you again soon."

The ambush had been almost a massacre. Twelve hundred Uhlans, officers and men, had gone down in the fight. None had got away, except a few who had ridden wildly back in search of the nearest detachments of their own forces. The little cavalry column started at a trot.

"You had the correct idea about General Carleton being no fool," Joe Wright confessed, as the cavalry trotted along, while Smith's brigade came pelting down the road at double time. "Our commander retreated from Belmont, and he has traveled at an awful rate to-day, but the Germans have had an awful time that they will never forget."

CHAPTER XIX

WITH THE GHOST OF THE ARMY

"**T**HIS war is no place for a patriot!" muttered Lieutenant Joe Wright, glancing up from a roster of the troop that he had been studying and marking.

"Bert, it's heartbreaking. We reached the coast with three officers and a hundred and ten men. We are now at Worcester, after a brief period of fighting. We've had one officer and thirty-four men killed, and forty-nine men are wounded and away from the command. After a fortnight or so of campaigning the troop now has two officers and twenty-seven men on hand for duty."

"It's tough enough," Howard admitted sadly. "But we've one thing to be happy about, Joe. Our fellows didn't bolt or skulk. They were true Americans, and ready to fight no matter what happened to them. Other commands, all about us, have suffered in the same way. And we've suffered in material, too. This army, or this ghost of an army, has but four airships left, and one of them was furnished as private property by two good citizens, Reade and Hazelton. Any day, even in a small fight, we stand to lose the four airships we have left. Our heavier artillery is all wrecked or captured. We have but six field batteries left, and not enough ammunition even for them. Our best troops, the Regulars, have been shot to pieces. Our own losses are fearful, but we have one great advantage over any other organization now in the field. We can fill up our ranks to the full size of the command,

and we are going to do it. Back in Gridley there are nearly four hundred high school boys, all of them trained. They're the reserve that is to be used to fill up this troop as it loses men. It ought not to be long before we have a full troop again."

Two officers and two civilians had come up behind the Gridley pair while they were talking. They were Prescott and Holmes, Reade and Hazelton.

"I know how Wright feels," Prescott broke in gravely. "It makes him feel sick to think that we have to lose so many fine fellows all to no purpose. The Germans have driven us within sight of Worcester, and they're going to start us on the run again just as soon as they're ready. Our comrades have made willing sacrifices of themselves, but their sacrifice has really been useless. Have you fellows heard what it cost us to fight this far in the campaign?"

"I'd like to know the figures," Joe answered. "I want to write home to-night."

"You won't be allowed to send the figures past the censor," Prescott continued, "but here they are. When the Germans first reached us, on the north shore, we had 11,000 Regulars, 21,000 Guardsmen and 6,000 volunteers of all kinds. Up to date we've had 2,350 Regulars killed and 5,100 wounded. The Guardsmen

have lost 3,300 killed and 10,800 wounded. The volunteers have lost 950 killed and 3,700 wounded. Out of 38,000 men that we started with on the north shore we have lost 26,200. Since the fighting began, 900 Regulars, 8,000 Guardsmen and 2,200 volunteers have been sent forward to us. That leaves us with an effective army of 22,900 men now with the colors. A one-day battle, and we'll have at least a few thousand less than that number. As Wright says, this isn't good news to a patriot."

Truly, the situation of the Americans could hardly have been worse. The skill of the commanders and the bravery of the men had been of the first order. None the less, the Americans, despite their reinforcements, had now but the semblance of an army as compared with the invaders.

General Carleton's center now lay a few miles southeast of Worcester, the left wing of the army covering that city. The right wing was extended as far as possible to the south, to hinder an enemy advance on Springfield, where were the United States arsenal and important munitions works. For some days arsenal and factory had ceased to supply the army with fighting materials, for, recognizing the impossibility of halting the German advance, the Pres-

ident of the United States had early ordered the dismantling of arsenal and factories, and the loading of all possible material on freight trains that had been steadily leaving Springfield for points further west. The pity of it was that east-bound trains could not bring in fresh troops in great numbers. Despite the fact that two million patriotic American men were now mustered in, and were training, few of these were fitted for present duty. It was now quite plain to most Americans that the Germans would finish the conquest of all desired parts of the United States before the hosts of American volunteers could either be trained to fight, or could be equipped with arms and ammunition.

“Leaving out the question of fighting men,” said Tom Reade sadly, “this army, if you can now call it one, is richest in motor cars and poorest in aircraft. We’re still mighty well able to run and to get away, for the autos will carry us fast. But we have just four craft now available, and the Germans have more than sixty, despite the number of their aircraft that we’ve wrecked. There isn’t a man in eastern Massachusetts who has an automobile or an auto truck. They were all rushed west before the Germans had even landed. So we can escape, if we’re quick about it, but we can’t see

the enemy's movements until the enemy comes into plain sight; and we won't be able to fight much longer, for we won't have ammunition to shoot at the enemy. Some of our people are already beginning to talk about suing Germany for peace."

"The scoundrels!" flared Joe Wright, leaping to his feet.

"But these same people who want to howl for peace," broke in Dick Prescott, "say that they are doing so because they don't want to have to think of any more of us poor fellows being killed or maimed."

"I'm only a high school boy," Joe went on angrily, "but young as I am, and little as I know, I'm positive I can speak for the army. *We* don't want peace unless we can name the terms. *We* don't want to stop fighting as long as there are enough of us left, even to throw stones at the Germans. The people who are hollering for peace may, with the army's full permission, go and drown themselves and take the stain of their presence off the country. I'm a boy, but if I haven't spoken truly for the army as it feels to-day, then you gentlemen have my permission to take me out and shoot me."

"We won't surrender, of course," Dick nodded, "as long as there are any of us left and

as long as we are allowed to fight. But you must remember, Wright, that the fighting forces have nothing to say about peace or war. This war will be continued or stopped, just as a few gentlemen in Washington decide, and they'll decide the way they think the people of the country want them to do."

"If there were only the men and the materials for fighting," declared Bert Howard feelingly, "there wouldn't be any need to think anything about surrender or peace. We could fight indefinitely if we had anything to fight with. If we had enough of an army, and had it equipped, the Germans wouldn't be able to budge us from this present line."

"If we had been supplied after that fashion," laughed Greg Holmes bitterly, "then very few Germans would have got on shore, and those few would now be sleeping peacefully under the sod."

"Well, it is of no use kicking," sighed Prescott. "We're not here to think, or to talk much, but to obey orders. Yet I'll wager that, if this country survives the war, and comes out of it whole, any man who talks against preparedness after that will be promptly mobbed and disposed of!"

Off to the eastward an aeroplane flew over the German lines. A dozen enemy aircraft rose

and gave chase, but the American flyer, with at least thirty per cent more speed, easily eluded them all for the time being. Tom Reade watched the daring work of the craft with appreciative interest.

"All our poorer craft are already down," he mused aloud. "The four we have left are all of exceptional speed, or their aviators wouldn't be here to tell the tale. If we lose one to-day, we'll have but three air 'eyes.' And we may lose all of them before the day is over."

A quarter of a mile back Reade's biplane lay in a little stretch of woods, to conceal it from the bombs of German aviators, who now flew over the American camp almost entirely unmolested.

Bert's ghost of a troop still lay in trench on the left of Follinsbee's battalion, though it was Follinsbee's no longer. Follinsbee had been killed two days before, and Carter, the only other captain with the battalion, had been hurried away the day before that in a motor ambulance, so badly wounded that it was doubted if he would ever be able to serve again. So Prescott, ranking first lieutenant, was now commander of the battalion, which, instead of six hundred men, mustered, exclusive of the young Gridley troopers, a bare two hundred and forty effective fighting men.

Lieutenant Anstey rode over, waving an envelope as he came.

"Captain Howard, your suggestion that First Sergeant William Clarke, of your troop, be promoted to second lieutenant has been duly approved by the War Department, and the President has made the nomination, which has been confirmed by the Senate. This order will authorize you to assign Sergeant Clarke to duty as second lieutenant. His commission may arrive in a few days."

"Sergeant Clarke!" called Bert, his face glowing as he read the order, and Clarke rose from the trenches, stepping forward with fine, soldierly carriage. "I should have called you Lieutenant Clarke," Bert continued. "You have been so commissioned. Read the order for yourself. Then provide yourself with the nearest thing to shoulder straps that you can sew for yourself."

Clarke read the order through, his lip trembling. He was happy until he came to the words, "Burnham, deceased." A tear rolled down one cheek. Bert and Wright felt similarly affected. The older, former Gridley boys turned away for the moment.

"Cadet Captain Howard," Anstey went on, in his slow, formal way, "your troop is now so small that, probably until your new draft of

men arrives, General Carleton has decided to take you out of the trenches. You will therefore report with your command at headquarters. You will be employed for bodyguard duty. Now that you have a second lieutenant, he will command, for the present, what is left of the troop. At Mr. Reade's request, approved by Lieutenant Prescott, Lieutenant Wright and yourself will be detailed to study military aviation. Mr. Reade and Mr. Hazelton will be your instructors for the present."

Here was news indeed. Bert turned with snapping eyes to Reade, who murmured:

"I know you didn't know anything about this, but I felt sure that Wright and yourself would enjoy flying, so I put in my application with Prescott's approval. If you would rather remain with your troop I imagine that the revoking of the order can be secured."

"Of course I want to be with my troop," Bert laughed. "Just the same, I also want to learn to fly. I'll have to be satisfied with one detail at a time. Mr. Reade, I thank you most heartily. I also thank you, sir," turning to Dick.

"And now," said Tom Reade, "why not take your first lesson on a biplane? You know, any time, Hazelton and I may be hit, and then you'd have to be in trim."

Was there foreboding in Tom's voice? At least, there was no fear, for Reade knew not what it was to dread danger.

CHAPTER XX

A DUEL IN THE AIR—OR SUICIDE?

BEFORE going to his biplane Tom walked his party over to headquarters, seeking a staff officer and asking if his services in the air were desired.

"Not now," came the answer. "Perhaps in an hour. We know what the Germans are doing this morning. They are already in too great force for us to attack, but they are not yet in sufficient force to attack us. They are marching heavy columns up to the line. The enemy's attack may begin this afternoon, or it may be put off until to-night or to-morrow."

"Then have I permission to fly a short distance westward, instead of eastward?" Reade asked. "Captain Howard and Lieutenant Wright have been detailed to me for instruction. I would like to give it to them early."

"You are at liberty to fly westward, or in any direction that does not needlessly invite enemy attack," replied the staff officer. "Keep

within sight of any possible signal we may wish to convey to you."

Saluting, Reade hastened away with his friends. In the grove they stepped aboard the biplane.

"The first lessons," said Tom slowly, "are always best given on the ground. Do you young gentlemen, for instance, happen to be familiar with machine gun marksmanship?"

"We were drilled in machine gun work at Gridley during parts of two years," Bert answered, "but we're by no means experts. However, we understand the handling of the parts of the gun. We can take one apart, clean it and put it together. If the gun jams, we know how to tinker with it."

"Any experience in sighting and firing?"

"Some," Bert admitted.

"Go ahead and show me some of the things you know about a machine gun," Reade directed. There were two such guns on the platform. Bert stepped to one, going through a brief drill, talking as he did so. Then Joe Wright took his turn at demonstrating.

"You fellows don't need more than some actual work to be handy enough with these rattlers," Tom declared approvingly. "Now, to look over the engines. But have you had airship drill?"

"We have both of us made several ascents, standing by the engines or steering," Bert announced.

"Oh, you have, eh?" demanded Tom, opening his eyes and gazing hard at Harry Hazelton. "Good old Gridley! Whatever is attempted in that town is done thoroughly. So you cadets had airship instruction. Come on, then. Show me what you know about these engines."

"They are of different pattern from any we have ever seen," Bert declared. So Reade, instead, did the demonstrating. Bert and Joe quickly absorbed most of the instruction.

"We're ready for an ascent, then," declared Tom, after a few minutes. "Hazelton will take the engines and I'll take the wheel. Wright, you stand by Hazelton, and Howard may watch me."

Calling to a few soldiers nearby, Reade secured their aid in running the big biplane out into open ground. Then, almost with a rush, Reade shot the biplane up into the air. A misinformed person would readily have believed this young civil engineer to be reckless, but Tom never took needless chances; whatever he did was based on knowledge and experience.

Up and up they went, until they were half a mile from earth. Wright, gazing backward, as

they flew west, could make out the toiling masses of German infantry as brigade after brigade marched over the rising and falling ground in the eastern distance. Here and there he saw artillery trains. He secured a vivid picture of what the enemy was doing in the way of preparations to crush this ghost of an American army. Then he turned his attention to the engines, and to Harry Hazelton, his teacher.

"When you want more speed, Howard," roared Reade, reaching for a lever, "so!"

In an instant the car was going at sixty miles an hour. Half a minute later the speed was climbing to eighty; soon after they were flying at a rate of not less than a hundred miles an hour when Tom decreased the speed.

"That was just to show you," he shouted.

"You see, you can't do this work without having your ears protected. Now, ask Hazelton to give you an aviator's cap out of the chest."

Harry had already so provided Joe Wright. Bert, his ears aching from the rush of air against the drums, was thankful to put his borrowed cap on in place.

"We'll speed her up again," Reade intimated. Once more they shot through the air at dizzying speed. Bert could not help recalling

his first glimpse of this marvelous craft, when Reade and Hazelton had come to their rescue out over the depths of the Atlantic on that tragic day of the naval disaster.

Not more than a full minute had they traveled at a dizzying speed when, without warning, Tom swung the biplane sharply around to the left, nearly at right angles.

"Don't try that trick at this speed until you've worked up to it through slower speeds," Reade yelled to his pupil. "A turn like that, until you're ready for it, is mighty likely to send you flying to earth."

Bert could well believe it. Reade put the craft through other astounding evolutions. One would have thought this daring pilot trying to wreck them all in the shortest time, but Tom came safely out of every hazard with the confidence and skill of the veteran air pilot.

"Watch out!" yelled Reade suddenly. Down, down they shot, so swiftly that Bert, unused to feats of this kind, felt as though the bottom were dropping out of his stomach. Then up again they went, soaring like a huge eagle. Almost as quickly came another drop, followed by several breath-destroying turns.

"I'll dream of this to-night," chuckled Howard, "and I thought myself too hardened, after the last fortnight, ever to dream again."

Joe Wright, meantime, was reviewing all he had ever learned about aircraft engines, and learning several things more. With all his maneuvering Reade took pains not to get more than five miles away from headquarters. Every minute or so his gaze traveled in search of signals from the slim, skeletonized steel tower.

At last Tom brought the car down to thirty-five miles an hour speed.

"Bend over and take hold of the wheel before I let go," Reade ordered Bert. "Show me what you can do."

"You don't want me to try any of your stunts, do you?" laughed Howard, as he slipped into the vacated pilot seat.

"Not unless you're sure of your performance," Tom smiled dryly. "The air pilot who tries to work up too fast without practice usually isn't a pilot at all, but just a fool. Do anything you feel sure of, Howard, but don't try to improve too rapidly. You will need considerable experience."

"But suppose I were to wreck the aeroplane while trying to learn to manage it," returned Bert.

"That's a chance every flyer has to take," said Reade calmly. "Now, keep your head, and show us what you know—and know well!"

For two or three minutes Bert was content

to drive at low speed, becoming accustomed to the touch and resistance of the wheel, and making a few careful, wide turnings. Then he descended and rose again, Tom looking on with grave attention.

"Let her out a few notches," he said at last.

Bert obeyed. Under greater speed he made some shorter turns.

"Do anything more that you wish," said Reade, at last. "You're prudent enough to be trusted. Now do the best you know how."

Bit by bit, Bert Howard steadily improved upon previous feats. He was not yet a first-class airman, but he had been well trained, none the less, as Tom quickly perceived.

"Now, let me take the wheel from you," Tom proposed, "and I'll show you a few things that you may like to try every now and then."

Carefully the change of pilots was made. Reade gave the cadet officer fifteen minutes of most valuable instruction, which Bert was skilled enough to be able to comprehend.

"Hullo! They're signaling us from the tower!" Reade exclaimed. Slowing down the speed, he sailed straight for the tower. A soldier with signal flag wig-wagged to them.

All four now read the signaled message, which was an order to steer eastward and observe the various German columns that were

coming up, their strength and the arm of service to which each unit belonged.

"Now, we're going to have a little run-in with Friend Teuton's air service!" chuckled Tom. "Tell Hazelton to stand by one gun, and, if the engines need attention, to send Wright back to them if possible. Otherwise Wright is to serve the second gun when the time comes."

Reade steered out over the American lines. Almost immediately there was a visible flutter among the dozen or so German craft that were in the air. The pilot of every one of them had had one interesting experience or another with audacious Reade and his efficient partner, Hazelton. It would be the proudest day in any German aviator's life if he could only succeed in sending Reade and Hazelton to destruction in their own machine.

"Talk about being popular, and blessed with a lot of friends!" laughed Tom, as the German aircraft, with almost one accord, began to fly warily toward him. "Say, but those chaps are mighty glad to see us coming down the cloud road!"

The advanced, temporary German line was now but four miles from the American trenches. Before Reade had left his own line a mile behind the German flyers began to spit at him

with their machine guns as fast as each flyer came into position to open fire.

"Tune up the band!" yelled Reade. Over the noise of the machinery Bert yelled his order to the pair at the guns. Just an instant later the pair began to rattle out defiance to the enemy craft. Now it was that Tom, crowding on every bit of speed, rose, fell, circled and zig-zagged in a fashion that kept the enemy gunners intensely busy in trying to see him through their sights.

Joe Wright soon became conscious of a feeling of annoying nausea. It was caused by the swift uprisings, the droppings and the wheelings of this monster of speed under the expert guidance of this most daring and skilled pilot with the American forces.

"Look at that fellow dead ahead!" roared Tom to Hazelton. "I'm going to get him, this time, if I never do another thing. Depress your gun. Wait until I go over him. Then let him have all you can give him through the top of his head just as we go over him."

From the operations of the pilot aboard the doomed aircraft it was as though he had heard Reade's remark. The German flyer did all in his power to scud away and rise, but Tom followed him relentlessly, at the same time dodging the other enemy craft. Most of the time

the American machine guns were snarling. Only their amazing turns saved the Americans from being torn to pieces by the missiles fired at them. Bert knew, in the first minute of real firing, that he was now under far more severe fire than he had ever experienced in the trenches.

"Ready!" roared Reade. "Be good, Harry!"

With that Tom completed, at furious speed, the feat of rising and passing over the craft he had doomed. At just the right second the machine gun under Hazelton's hands opened fire. Bullets rained down. Soon, despite the best zigzagging work of the German flyer, the enemy biplane was so thoroughly riddled that her steering wheel was jammed and one of her engines blew up at the same instant. Like a torn and mangled bird the German craft turned over sideways, then floated helplessly, swiftly to earth. At least, at the distance, it looked like floating; in fact the machine struck earth so hard as to smash it into fine splinters and scrap metal. Both Germans aboard were instantly killed.

"Got him," clicked Reade. "Poor fellow! Personally I'm sorry for him, but he was bent on interfering with the Star Spangled Banner's right to go on waving."

Traveling at a high rate of speed, Reade had

carried his party by the first squadron of enemy aircraft. They did not pursue for the reason that not one of them was fitted for such speed. But now, out over the German columns toiling over the roads to reach their advanced front, appeared another division of four biplanes.

"They saw what some of us did back there," Tom observed dryly. "Now they're going to try to punish us. Maybe they'll succeed—or not!"

Hazelton stood by his gun, slipping in a new belt of ammunition. Joe Wright, watching and taking his cue, did the same thing at the second gun.

"It's amazing to think of the ammunition that goes wild from airships," muttered Bert, thinking of what he had heard of the coming shortage of ammunition for the American infantry arm of the service.

"If it weren't nearly all wasted, aviation would go out of use with armies for lack of craft," Tom laughed. "Some days we fire a good many thousands of rounds, but every cartridge of it is needed to keep us from joining the increasing heap of airship junk. One thing that a war biplane *must* expend freely and extravagantly is machine gun ammunition."

As he neared the oncoming enemy biplanes

Tom saw three of them fly higher at once, leaving in his path a craft at least as large and powerful as his own.

"That's one of the stars of the German air fleet," Tom confided, in a loud shout to Bert Howard. "See him come at us! We've got to rid the air of him, even at the cost of going to pieces ourselves. Get ready to part with life, my boy!"

"Go as far as you can!" Bert shouted back at his friend, full of the fire and recklessness of this greatest branch of war service.

Nor did it take Tom's practiced eye long to discover that this particular enemy flier possessed greater speed than his own airship did.

"I can't get over him!" Tom gasped, not in fear, but in wrath. "Nor can we run away from him. *Fellows!*"

"Here!" thundered the three voices of Hazelton, Howard and Wright.

"Get ready for death! I'm going to ram him—the only way! It will smash both flyers and send them a mile down to the ground!"

"Rush at it!" came back in steady voices from the other three Americans.

Tom Reade did not even brace himself. He merely threw on the last atom of speed. Planes level, he sailed straight at the German, who ac-

cepting the challenge, came onward. One machine gun on the enemy craft, two on Reade's, belched bullets across space at each other. But it was to be the crash of the two monster birds themselves that should end the fray!

CHAPTER XXI

THE BIRDMEN'S PRIZE DISCOVERY

INSTINCTIVELY the men at the machine guns checked their fire, holding their breath against the final tragedy.

In the few seconds before the crash the German pilot changed his mind and his course. He wheeled so swiftly, traveling at breathless speed that he cleared himself of the American craft where such an avoidance seemed impossible. Yet it was done at the greatest cost, for, a second or two late in regaining his course and equilibrium, the German pilot failed to stabilize. His right plane end dropped, and the craft, standing on end sidewise, the aviator could not regain control in time. The propeller whirled uselessly, something fouled in the engines. Tom Reade, taking a wide detour, came back in time to see the machine going earthward. It was impossible for the German machine to regain equilibrium.

Down went the doomed aircraft, volplaning being out of the question. It was but a matter of moments when the biplane was a wreck and the two Germans shapeless in sudden death.

"His nerve must have failed him at the last moment," Reade commented, "or else he believed that I would turn to my right also, and that we would turn and come back at each other for another try."

As the other three flyers of the division were heading back to avenge the destruction of their comrades, Reade, using his superior speed, prudently changed to his original course. Mile after mile he flew, Bert Howard noting the nature and strength of the military columns.

The motor cars of the conquered part of Massachusetts had been seized and sent out of reach before the invaders advanced, the railroads torn up and much of the track destroyed. Therefore the Germans had been reduced to plain marching. The enemy had brought many automobiles with them on their transport fleet, but not enough for the movement of regiments.

Thus the Americans, though far weaker in numbers, had much the advantage of their foes in the matter of quick mobility from point to point. This had been the main factor in the ability of General Carleton's forces to hold a vastly superior fighting force so long in partial

check. Had the Germans possessed equal speed in moving their troops the campaign would have ended in disastrous rout long before this.

"We have seen all that Friend Teuton has to show us at this part of the map, I think," declared Tom, later on. "We may as well go back."

"And I'd enjoy having the wheel," said Bert, "only it is probable that the enemy flyers will be watching for us, to even up the score they must feel that they hold against us."

"You may take the wheel, if you like," Tom offered, after he had faced about. "Until I get our information before General Carleton I don't feel like taking foolish risks. My plan is to fly well to the southward until we are west of the German lines, and then to make for Worcester and out to General Carleton's headquarters. You'd better relieve me as pilot, and I can stretch a bit and at the same time be able to offer you a few suggestions. Change now?"

The change was accomplished. Bert, at the wheel, took a direct southward course, Tom offering suggestions from time to time. Hazelton, after a look at the engines, and noting that Joe Wright stood competently by, stretched himself on the platform. Reade, with the glasses to his eyes, soon remarked:

"We're a bit southeast of Milbury now. Our

line stops between there and Uxbridge. We can go within a few miles of the Connecticut boundary, then turn west, come up west of Worcester, and drop down near headquarters. It will be a long enough drive for you to-day, Howard."

Going at a speed of sixty miles an hour the machine was soon well south of Uxbridge.

"Mr. Reade!" called Bert, in sudden excitement. "Look over to the east, or rather a little to the south of east. What do you see there?"

Tom replied slowly.

"I don't see much of anything," answered the young civil engineer.

"Use your glasses, then. There are troops—marching by three nearly parallel roads—hosts of troops. There's a veritable army over there, Mr. Reade!"

As Tom lazily swung his glasses around he displayed but languid interest. The instant he called the lenses to his aid, however, he fairly jumped.

"Howard, you are right. But how did you make it out so clearly?"

"Instinct, or the difference in the look of the landscape," Bert returned. "Mr. Reade, that German army yonder is not marching to attack General Carleton's lines."

"They must be marching to flank us," Tom uttered.

"Or else to get by our right wing and into Connecticut and on the way to New York," Bert explained as his idea. "Why, Mr. Reade, that force could detach a sufficient force to attack us on flank or rear, and still march on to New Haven and thence to New York. It's an obvious bit of strategy, and we've been favored in finding it out by chance. Can you make the enemy out more plainly now?"

"A lot more plainly," Tom agreed. "See here, Howard, you're of more use as a military observer. Let me take the seat and the wheel and you stand up here with the glasses and tell me where you want to go. Now!"

Quickly the change was made, with Reade now at the wheel and Howard standing at his right and somewhat behind, leaning against a railing built there for just such protection in observation work.

"A little more to the southeast, please!" the cadet captain shouted, and Tom obediently turned. The big fellow was so competent in his own lines of work that he did not object to taking orders at need from a younger man.

"Now," called Bert presently, "keep about the same course until we are in sight of the end

of the German columns. I'll make rapid notes, while I observe, as to their apparent strength and the numbers of each arm of service. There! I can make out the supply trains now. They are large, even for an army of the size of the one yonder."

In three-quarters of an hour, traveling at top speed, Bert Howard had all the information he wanted. Up to this time they had not had to look out for airships rising from the marching army to attack them. The reason for that was plain. Had this stealthily moving extra army sent up aircraft these must have been observed from the American lines. Hence this army below had been marching with its aircraft loaded on the supply trains. From appearances there were not more than four of these unwieldy pieces of field baggage with the army now under observation.

"But they'll be getting up and at us if this sort of thing keeps up," Tom Reade averred. "If you agree now, Howard, I'll turn and make for our own destination."

"And the sooner we reach General Carleton's headquarters, the better," Howard assented. "This news is sure to make all the difference in the world to our commander. My, but our little army will be busy after we get back."

"There's one advantage in being a flyer—a birdman," chuckled Hazelton quietly. "Whenever an army has to retreat the airmen are next thing to sure of being able to get away fast enough."

"Just excepting the times," grimaced Joe Wright, "when the enemy airmen are more alert than we are. For a pleasant death, commend me to one on the ground."

Presently our friends were out of sight of the stealthy army they had discovered, and in sight of Worcester. Easily they circled around, driving on to the American lines and presently descending near headquarters.

"Come on, Howard," called Tom, as soon as the biplane had touched earth. "We'll take our wares to market, meaning headquarters. Your chum and mine can look after the machine."

General Carleton was so busy that he sent out to inquire the nature of the news that the aviators had brought back with them. Tom hastily wrote a few words on a slip of paper. The effect was instantaneous. He and Howard were taken before the commander at once. General Carleton listened with deep interest, though he betrayed no astonishment.

"It was to have been expected," he commented, "though I did not look for such an en-

15—1 *Conquest.*

veloping move so soon. Marshal von Waller intends to send enough troops here to keep us employed in front and to flank us on our left. His other army, marching toward Connecticut, can detach a strong column to come up west of Worcester. Von Waller would then have us bottled up and taken care of. He could await our surrender at his convenience, for he would then have achieved his object of preventing us from retreating and joining the defenders of New York City. Gentlemen," turning to four generals and several staff officers, "the defense of Massachusetts is at an end!

"We will make all our preparations in the next few minutes. Our country may lose, but our only concern in this moment must be to do even a little better than we have done as soldiers! Listen, gentlemen! Your orders—and the army's!"

CHAPTER XXII

OVER THE ENEMY'S LINE IS OUT

WHAT followed came with dizzying suddenness. Within fifteen minutes after he had outlined his plan General Carleton sent away the first regiments in

automobiles, speeding southwest. Telegraphic orders went ahead, calling up the towns and cities on the way to turn out their able workmen for trench digging and other service. The orders were made so emphatic that the civil authorities were not likely to disregard them, especially as the first soldiers to speed away were ordered to enforce these military commands.

Within an hour, more than half of the troops on the present line had departed in cars. All the cavalry was started early, riding hard for a few miles and then entraining upon waiting flat and box cars.

Soon afterward two batteries of American artillery opened a brisk fire upon the nearest Germans. It was replied to heavily, German flyers coming out over the American lines. Logs had been laid in the trenches to look like soldiers. Hardly had the German flyers withdrawn with their reports when the American batteries ceased firing, and were at once whisked away to the nearest railway trains. These military trains of Uncle Sam represented the last of the railway rolling stock left in this area. At the last moment many long sections of track were blown up.

Bert Howard and Joe rode with the remnant of their Gridley troop. They were told that

they would be instructed when to report again for flying duty.

With such speed had the army moved that, before nine o'clock, it was stationed in a new line of trenches, many miles away, the line extending from south of Ware, southward past Monson and reaching over the the boundary line into Connecticut. From a strategic point of view it was a poor line, but it was the best that could be done with an army of only a little more than twenty-six thousand troops of all arms. The advancing enemy was yet miles away.

Citizens still toiled, soldiers working with them in throwing up the strongest temporary fortifications that could be erected. Wire entanglements were again laid. The three remaining biplanes of the American force were up in the air most of the night, employing their searchlights in seeking out the invaders. All of the cavalry was thrown ahead to get in touch with the first advance detachments of the enemy.

At daylight, when Bert Howard rode in, under orders, he found thousands of citizens still engaged in laying the wire entanglements under military direction.

"Are the Germans coming?" demanded a man, rising to mop his brow.

"Yes," Bert nodded.

"Then it's time we got out of here," grunted the man.

"It will be a few hours before the Germans get near enough to do any shooting," Bert smiled, after he had instructed Joe to have the horses groomed, watered and fed at picket line.

"It's pretty rough to expect us to do all the work to make you safe," continued the man grumblingly. "You soldiers ought to do your own work."

"Perhaps we'd be willing to," laughed the cadet officer, "if you citizens will exchange and do the fighting and the dying."

"Get busy there, friend," admonished a soldier in charge of the work at this point.

"Oh, you think you're smart, just because you've a gun, don't you?" growled the kicker.

"I won't argue with *you*," retorted the soldier. "I'll turn you over to some of your own fellow-citizens, who are willing to help the soldiers in trying to save the country."

Grabbing the kicker in a vise-like grip, the soldier hustled him down the line to a group of civilian workmen. There the soldier explained the argument to the citizen workers. Bert lingered just long enough to see the citizen toilers pounce upon their townsman, give

him a workmanlike beating, and then drive him away under a shower of stones.

By nine o'clock that morning the Germans came up, and began firing. Huge shells explored every yard of the trenches. Repeated infantry assaults were made. It would have been easy enough to turn the flanks of this feeble little army, but the German commander had had trouble enough with these stubborn men of Uncle Sam's. He preferred demolishing them to chasing them. So the frontal attack continued all day, its fury never abating.

By nightfall General Carleton realized that his only wise course lay in again fleeing, with all expedition, and taking up a new line near New Haven.

As soon as possible after dark the remnant of Carleton's army fled in automobiles and by train, as on the night before. Their new line, before daylight, was spread over a few miles in advance of New Haven by some six miles.

"It's a foot-race now, with death for the stakes," was the common word that passed through the ranks. Yet it was said with a laugh. American fighting pluck dies hard.

Before evening that next day the invaders had come in sight of the new, feeble line of Uncle Sam's last defenders in New England.

The New Haven munitions factories, after sending forward to the line the last cartridges that could be offered, had succeeded in getting much of its machinery aboard freight trains that promptly started away. Some lathes and other machinery, too heavy for prompt transport, were now demolished. General Carleton knew that he had before him only some skirmishing and an orderly retreat, if it were possible, toward New York.

While the flyers had reported that the nearest German detachments were still seven miles away, the cavalry were thrown out in small detachments along the many roads.

"When you sight an enemy, fire a few rounds, then fall back with all speed," was the order delivered to each cavalry commander.

Bert's sad remnant of the Gridley troop was thrown out on a road that ran in sight of Long Island Sound.

"A double corporal's guard could thrash all that is left of Gridley's high school contribution to this campaign," grumbled Lieutenant Joe Wright.

"No, it couldn't—not unless it ambushed us," Bert retorted pleasantly. "Right now we're going to do all we can to prevent such a surprise."

Only three men were left in the road. Six

were deployed, at intervals, in the field on either side.

"If you sight any enemy detachment or column," was Bert's final order, "fire promptly as a signal. If it proves to be the enemy, every man will promptly ride to the road. But be careful, if about to fire, that you do not shoot into any of our own panic-stricken American citizens who may hustle along in the foolish belief that they'll be safer in New Haven than out in the open."

"Privates Hewitt and Bond will ride two hundred yards east down the road, or to suitable cover at about that distance," Bert next ordered, after the men had been placed. "You will see to it that you sit in saddle as much out of view from the road as possible. If you see an enemy approaching you will fire or not, as you deem best, but do not let anything interfere with your riding back at once. Remember that we are out on picket duty, not to fight."

Bert thereupon stationed himself with the solitary trooper now left in the road at the line. Joe Wright spent some of the time there, and much more time in riding out behind either flank.

There had been an early moon, but this had gone down. The stars shone mistily, throwing little light over the scene.

"It seems hard to realize, at this moment, that we are in war," Joe murmured, returning from one of his frequent trips. "For all we can see or hear we might as well be sound asleep."

"Then it takes a different spectacle to impress you with a sense of war," answered Captain Howard. "To me the alert sentry, ready to fire and then ride back like the wind, means war, for it implies the need of complete watchfulness against a coming enemy. I've heard and read that actual fighting takes up a very small part of a soldier's time."

"From what I've seen so far," yawned Lieutenant Wright, "I'd say that war is a mixture of gentlemen's jockey races and automobile rides. We do the jockey racing, and the dough-boys (infantrymen) divide their time between foot races and automobile excursions."

Two hours slipped by. Duty soon began to be irksome. Under different conditions this picket would have been relieved at the end of two hours, but there were now no other Gridley troopers to send in the place of these few armed watchers.

"I'd like to send some of the fellows back for a nap," Howard explained, when three hours of duty had passed. "But there isn't one of our fellows that can be spared."

"I wouldn't mind a nap myself," Joe gaped.

"Perhaps you'll have a long one after the next fight," muttered the cadet captain. "An awful number of our fellows have been napping for days now."

"That might not be so bad," Joe retorted, shrugging his shoulders. "For one, I wouldn't mind entering the long nap if I knew that the sacrifice would drive the invaders from our country."

"Sh!" warned Bert, holding up a hand for silence. He listened intently, certain that he had heard a faint, but familiar sound. Silently he slipped from saddle, giving his bridle to Private Satterlee. Lying down in the road he listened with one ear to the ground.

"Hear anything?" Joe inquired, finally, in a whisper.

"Yes; there is something moving over the road to the east of us. I will ride down to our men ahead," Bert finished, rising and hastily brushing dust from his uniform.

Cautious not to give alarm in turn, Howard moved at an ambling pace.

"Heard anything?" he inquired of Hewitt and Bond.

"Nothing, sir," answered both in undertones.

"I believe that a force of some sort and size

is approaching from the east," Bert went on. "Bond, hand your bridle to Hewitt and listen with your ear to the ground."

Bond obeyed, listening intently, frowning when his own horse impatiently pawed the turf.

"I think you're right, sir," reported the young trooper. "I hear a sound as of men approaching, and there is some rhythm to the sound."

"I'm going down the road half a mile or so," Cadet Captain Howard continued. "If one of you wishes, he may ride with me. It is not an order to either of you, for it is probably a task of unusual peril."

"I'll go, sir," offered both Gridley boys in a breath.

"I can't take you both," Bert smiled.

"Hewitt, say you'll stay behind and let me go," pleaded Private Bond.

"Go along, then," agreed Trooper Hewitt, though reluctantly.

"Private Hewitt, if you hear us get into anything that you're sure is trouble, fire your piece in the air, then ride back to Lieutenant Wright, and tell him that he is to fall back at once. If Private Bond and I run into anything, either we'll be back in a hurry, or we won't return at all."

"I wish I were going, too," sighed Hewitt,

but his captain and comrade did not hear, for they were urging their horses forward at a stealthy amble.

"Keep behind me, Bond," Bert directed. "Then we won't run into anything at the same moment. In case of trouble, don't lose time trying to rescue me. Don't forget that! Your principal duty, if we encounter the enemy, is to carry the warning back. Fire as you ride if you have to go back without me."

"I hope we'll go back together, Captain," was the quick response.

Before they had covered half a mile the two Gridley boys rode around a bend in the road. Instantly there was a hoarse command in German, followed by a sheet of flame from carbines. Bert had only time to see the dark forms of a considerable number of Uhlans on their horses. He turned, but as he was doing so half a dozen mounted men rushed at him. Although Bert Howard drew his saber, then his automatic revolver, the men on horseback gave him no time to defend himself. His assailants rode against young rider and horse, the shock pitching the cadet captain from the saddle to the road beneath.

In a jiffy three dismounted Uhlans pounced upon him, pinning him down so that he could not use his weapons.



Two Dismounted Uhlans Pounced Upon Bert.

Even in that crisis Bert listened to the wild galloping of a troop horse westward, waiting for the sharp crack of Bond's carbine shot of warning.

"Why doesn't he fire a shot?" Captain Howard wondered feverishly.

But Private Bond couldn't fire, for that hapless youth lay face up in the dust, a bullet through his forehead. Only his horse got away.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BITTERNESS OF THE VANQUISHED

"**S**IR, you are our prisoner," said a formal voice, speaking in English, followed by some words in German.

The Uhlans, having disarmed the Gridley cadet, drew him to his feet.

"You are an officer?" continued the German captain, speaking as he rode closer.

"A cadet captain, sir," Bert answered.

"How can that be—a cadet and a captain at the same time?" demanded the astounded German officer.

"Because, sir, I am a cadet, and a captain of cadets," Howard responded courteously. "I was a high school boy until this war began."

"Ah, then you belong to a unit of irregular troops?" demanded the German.

"No, sir; our troop was sworn into the army service, and I hold my cadet commission by the authority of our President. If there were light enough, I could show you the U. S. insignia on my collar, also the rising sun that denotes the cadet, or junior, service."

At the captain's command a soldier struck a light. Bert Howard stood forth revealed in the conventional uniform of his country's military service and with collar insignia as he had claimed.

"It is fortunate for you that you do not belong to some body of irregular troops, or I would have you shot at once," replied the German captain.

At that moment several shots rang out ahead on the road. Bert knew that his lieutenant had been warned, and rejoiced. The next moment, on foot, escorted by two mounted Uhlans, Howard was being marched eastward.

Two minutes later he came upon the rest of a regiment of Uhlans. Behind them were two batteries of artillery, then a brigade of infantry. It was at the rear of the latter organization that he was turned over into the custody of an infantry officer, the two Uhlans thereupon saluting and spurring back to the front.

"I shall be obliged to send you back to corps headquarters," said the infantry officer, after extending his hand as to a brother officer. "It may be safer back there."

"You must feel that we Americans prize safety above all else," Bert smiled bitterly as he thought of the swift retreat of General Carleton's forces through the Bay State.

"The safety of a prisoner of war must always be considered when the interests of the captor permit," replied the German politely. "Besides, if we are to go into action we cannot be cumbered with prisoners."

A corporal and two men were ordered to escort Bert and two German soldiers—the latter plainly men who were under arrest for reasons of discipline—to corps headquarters. The corporal and his two men led the prisoners to a field beyond the line of march, where they might not interfere with advancing troops.

They traveled slowly, for the walking was bad out there in the grass, and the corporal evidently reasoned that as the Germans advanced corps headquarters would come to him.

Twenty minutes later the sound of heavy firing came from ahead. Two or three minutes after that the familiar, heavy bark of German artillery came on the air. A night engagement was on at one point in the line.

All through the night the sound of firing was borne back, long after Bert had found himself inside a roped enclosure, guarded by sentries, half a mile back of the firing line. The German army corps had halted, for the Americans ahead were putting up the hardest fight of which they were capable.

Daylight came, finding Bert Howard now one of about fifty prisoners. Of these some twenty were German soldiers, the others American soldiers, but Bert was the only officer among them.

As some of the German soldiers spoke English, these engaged the American soldiers in conversation.

"I wonder how many of these Germans are only seeming prisoners, sent here to find out from our fellows as much as possible about the plight of Carleton's army," was the thought that flashed through Howard's mind. At once he began moving about among his comrades, cautioning them in undertones to be careful not to tell anything of vital importance to these Germans.

"It's all right, and even wise, to be sociable," he added, "but you shouldn't let these enemy soldiers draw you out into telling anything that would help German commanders."

Though the American shell-fire was ex-
16—1 *Conquest.*

tremely limited in quantity, its quality was admirable—so much so that no shells exploded as far back as this German corps headquarters. Bullets swept the field, but the prisoners had been able to lie down in a hollow where they were little exposed to the American fire.

For breakfast the prisoners were furnished with bread and black coffee. Hardly had they finished when a staff officer rode up and spoke to the officer in charge of the prisoners. Though Howard could not follow the talk he judged that orders were being given in reference to the prisoners.

“We’re to be taken back three miles, to general headquarters,” explained one of the English-speaking German prisoners. “Men in arrest are never kept near the danger zone longer than is necessary. In the night there was no one to think of us.”

That three miles proved to be nearer five. The further Bert Howard was marched with the other prisoners the further he found himself being carried from the noise of battle. Now the crackle of infantry fire came to him faintly, the booming of the big guns sounded like thunder miles away.

In a stately country mansion overlooking the Sound, Field Marshal von Waller had established his headquarters the evening before. At

least a score of German automobiles stood in the grounds. German sentries paced back and forth. Several tents, large and small, had been set up, and the whole scene around headquarters was one of hiving industry and rush, though all the haste seemed orderly and systematized.

Past the headquarters and down a road nearly a quarter of a mile from the great house the prisoners were marched to a factory building, the new prison for von Waller's army. But the prisoners were not driven into the building. A rope fence had been laid off around the factory, German sentries pacing just outside the line, while half a dozen German non-commissioned officers moved through the yard, giving orders and keeping discipline among the prisoners. Though Howard did not at once know the figures, he found himself one of at least some eight hundred prisoners, nearly all of them being American soldiers and some officers.

"I hear that we're soon to be shipped back to Boston," said a Regular Army officer who introduced himself as Major Claiborne.

"Shall we have to walk all that distance?" asked the Gridley boy.

"Oh, no; we shall be sent by rail."

"But we blew the railroads up."

"And the Germans rebuilt them," smiled Major Claiborne. "They brought an abundance of ties and rails with them from Germany. They are short of rolling stock, though. They brought about a score of engines and some three hundred freight and passenger cars, all built to fit the American standard gauge track. I have heard that the Shore Line track will be rebuilt up to this point by to-night."

Just as the major finished speaking a series of dull but terrific explosions to the westward made the ground tremble.

"That cannot be artillery, can it, sir?" Bert asked.

"It's more likely that our forces are retreating and that General Carleton has ordered the cartridge factories and railway shops at New Haven to be blown up," replied the older officer.

Within an hour they knew that surmise to have been a true one. And the advance detachments of the invaders, entering New Haven, retaliated by setting fire to the city. The smoke of the burning town drifted slowly eastward, passing over von Waller's headquarters.

"The New England property loss from the burning of towns is going to reach hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars," sighed Major Claiborne. "It would almost seem as if

it would be better to let all the factories fall into the enemy's hands."

"I'm satisfied to leave that to the President and to General Carleton," Howard rejoined. "I don't know the President, but I do know that General Carleton is as shrewd and noble an American as we have."

Now they noticed two German staff officers walking along outside the roped-in enclosure. When they came to the entrance they stepped inside past the sentries, who presented arms.

"It has come to the field marshal's ears," said one of the staff officers to a non-commissioned officer who stood rigidly at attention, "that among the American prisoners there is one boy who terms himself a 'cadet captain.' As his excellency, the field marshal, never before heard of such a thing as a cadet and a captain, he is curious to see this prisoner. Where is he?"

"Come forward! You are wanted!" spoke the non-commissioned officer, in English, turning and beckoning to Bert.

Young Howard, who had not understood what the staff officer said in German, stepped forward. Now the officer who had spoken in German addressed the Gridley boy in English.

"Field Marshal von Waller has directed

that you be brought before him at once, sir.”

To Bert’s surprise, after he had saluted, and the staff officers had returned his salute, both held out their hands.

“For we see by your insignia that you *are* an officer, young as you appear to be,” explained the spokesman of the pair. “Be good enough to accompany us.”

Bowing, Bert Howard went with his conductors. Yet inwardly he felt stiff with dismay.

“I’ve heard that von Waller has a rare memory for faces,” the Gridley boy told himself. “In that case von Waller will be sure to recognize me as the pretended farmer boy with whom he spoke in Boston City Hall the other day. If he does, he’ll know that I was a spy at that time, and my present status as a prisoner of war won’t protect me in the least. I wonder how it feels to be shot as a spy? And I wonder if I’ll be given even an opportunity to write home, and if my letter will be sent forward to the American lines for mailing?”

It was not a pleasant train of thought that rioted in Captain Bert Howard’s mind as he neared Field Marshal von Waller’s headquarters.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION

LONG ago the last sounds of battle ceased, yet around headquarters the hurrying of officers and men was as brisk as though a great battle were in progress. In point of fact, headquarters was directing the swift forward movement of troops in pursuit of the now fleeing American soldiers.

Before the day was over, it may be said in passing, another pitched battle was fought, several miles west of New Haven. It was so stubbornly contested that von Waller decided to fight it to a finish, instead of attempting flanking operations, that he might the sooner demolish this obstinate, comparative handful of Americans. After dark the surviving American soldiers again retreated in automobiles and by train, getting away just in season before the eager invaders discovered their intention.

To return to our Gridley friend—Bert presently found his German staff companions most pleasant young men as far as their treatment of him went. They conversed, as they walked, on a variety of topics, but did not once attempt

to "pump" him, more than was conveyed in this one question:

"How much longer do you Americans intend to keep up this useless fight, sacrificing even the small army that you have?"

"American soldiers, sir," was Bert's courteous reply, "have nothing to do with that question. We hear, and we obey to the best of our ability. Some one else determines what we are to do."

"You are the most stubborn people we have ever met," was the smiling response of Howard's questioner. "No other people on earth would have fought us so obstinately knowing their sacrifices to be hopeless."

"Perhaps Field Marshal von Waller, not knowing at this moment that he is going to recognize me as a spy, thinks that, because I am a boy, he can extract a good deal of information from me as to just how greatly discouraged our army may feel," thought Bert, as they turned into the headquarters building. "If that is what he is up to, he may as well order out the firing squad at once."

In the lower corridor of the building groups of officers stood chatting eagerly, while other officers passed hurriedly through. Bert's conductors led him up a flight of stairs to the corridor above. Just as they arrived there How-

ard saw the Field Marshal come out of a room, followed by four officers, and walk hastily past them toward the stairs. Von Waller returned the salutes of Bert's conductors, though he seemed to look neither to the right nor the left.

"Evidently you will have to wait," nodded one of Bert's conductors. "Step in here."

Bert was shown into a room. There the two staff officers took leave of him, shaking hands with him.

"You will find his excellency a most amiable and courteous enemy," declared one of the pair. Then Howard was left to himself. He was the sole occupant of the room, which contained only a few chairs and a table. Two sentries stood at the door.

And in that room Bert put in the next few hours. Finally he drew three chairs together in a row, stretched himself out and went sound asleep. That slumber was the most welcome he had enjoyed in weeks.

Though he stirred several times it was afternoon when Bert woke fully enough to rise and stretch. Though his bones ached from contact with the hard wood, his eyes were no longer heavy.

"It's funny that a fellow should want such a rest just before he's to be shot for a spy!"

Glancing at his watch the Gridley boy was

much astonished at the lateness of the hour.

"It looks as if the Field Marshal has forgotten me. I wonder if he has? I suppose I should worry about that!"

"Cadet Captain Albert Howard!" summoned an officer, standing in the doorway, an unfolded paper in his hand.

"No," muttered Bert, "the Field Marshal didn't forget me. I don't suppose a great German soldier ever forgets anything." So he stepped forward, saluting, and replying: "I am Cadet Captain Howard."

"Are you sure of that?" demanded the German officer, almost gruffly, at the same time eyeing the prisoner of war keenly.

"Why, I can't recall ever having done such a thing as to be mistaken as to my identity," Bert laughed.

"And you declare that you are Cadet Captain Howard?"

"I most certainly and solemnly do so declare," Bert laughed. "I offer, if you wish, most certain assertion of my identity."

"I haven't time for merriment," said the German sharply, and, indeed, his furrowed and saturnine face showed it. "You will come with me."

"Now, for the Field Marshal, discovery and execution!" thrilled the boy. Somehow, he did

not feel as terrified as he had expected to feel.

Instead of taking him into the Field Marshal's office this gruff guide led the Gridley boy downstairs, then outside to a motor bus. Half a dozen German officers were entering it and seating themselves. Bert's guide spoke to another, younger officer, and handed him the paper he had been holding. Then that officer, after putting the document away in a breast pocket, led Bert to the bus, signing him to enter, next taking a seat at Howard's side.

"If he expects me to ask questions, and look scared, I won't humor him," the boy told himself.

More officers entered, until the bus was filled with passengers, after which an order was given. The bus, turning out of the grounds, took a westward course along the road.

The officers present, conversing merrily in German, took as little notice of the Gridley boy as though they had been accustomed, all through the campaign, to driving about with American officers.

At points along the way one officer and then another left the bus. The vehicle traveled at rapid speed. When they had gone some miles Bert turned to the officer beside him.

"The Field Marshal must be well up toward the front."

"I cannot tell you," replied the German officer, "where the Field Marshal is."

"Why, I thought he wanted to look me over, and that you were taking me to him."

"Why should his excellency want to see you?" demanded the German officer in amazement.

"He sent for me, earlier in the day, and I was taken to headquarters," was Bert's response.

"Then he must, afterward, have been too busy to see you. Don't you know where you are being taken, and why?"

"I assure you, sir, that I don't."

"Just as it happened," went on the German, making a grimace, "two small detachments of our men were foolish enough to let themselves be taken prisoners this morning by your comrades of the American army. His excellency, the Field Marshal, felt disturbed by such an affair, as you have not taken many of us hitherto. So he sent a flag of truce to General Carleton, proposing an exchange of prisoners. General Carleton replied by asking for names of American prisoners, of whom we have far more than you Americans have of ours. Your name must have gone forward, for you were named in General Carleton's exchange proposals. His excellency was most glad to exchange an American boy for a German man, and so you are



being taken to our front for exchange."

For exchange! Bert's heart leaped with sudden, wild joy. He had not been afraid of death, but if death must come he preferred to meet it side by side with his own comrades in battle.

When all the officers but Bert's guide had been left along the route the motor bus seemed to fly more swiftly than ever along the level roads. Then the vehicle began to pass through a scene that the boy quickly recognized as a fighting front, and the car slowed down, stopping near a line of German trenches before which a white flag flew. Yonder, perhaps half a mile away, stood a line of automobiles, each carrying a white flag of truce.

The bus in which Bert rode was joined by another bus, from which Major Claiborne waved a cordial hand. There were several other American officers with him. Behind came bus after bus containing enlisted men of the United States Army.

At the line all of the Americans were ordered to dismount. Escorted by a troop of Uhlans, the Americans went out in front of the German line. From the distant American cars a similar procession started. The two processions drew near each other. Two mounted German staff officers, preceded by a trooper holding a

white flag aloft, met Major Lantry and Lieutenant Anstey of General Carleton's staff. The four officers met, shook hands, then fell to tallying off names on sheets of paper.

"I am most glad to see you again, Captain Howard," spoke a cordial voice at the Gridley boy's side. It was Lieutenant von Schiller, who held out his hand. "It is most fitting, is it not," pursued the young German, "that I, whom you captured, should be offered in exchange for you? I understand that Field Marshal von Waller was asked if he would consider a German lieutenant of the line a fair exchange for a cadet captain. And do you know, I have just heard that it was my uncle who captured you? A queer little world, is it not?"

Then Bert and von Schiller took hurried leave of each other, for the exchange formalities had been completed. Howard found himself in a group of American officers headed toward the American lines.

"I'm heartily glad to see you safe, Howard," drawled Lieutenant Anstey, riding up, dismounting, shaking hands and walking beside the Gridley boy. "We heard you were killed, and Prescott, Holmes and several others outside of your own little shadow command were down below the surface in the dumps."

"Where are our forces now?" Bert inquired presently.

"Two miles east of Bridgeport," Lieutenant Anstey answered. "If the Germans do not chase us out before, we are going to leave right after dark, anyway. We're too shot to pieces to be able to hold Bridgeport even for twenty-four hours. Out of an original army of 38,000 men—and reinforcements—we have now a scant 14,000 men. The plan is to fall back and join the defenders of New York City, which is the present German objective. I wonder if we shall be able to hold out any longer at New York than we did at Boston? Of course, there is a fresh army to join us at New York, and it may be that we can do better."

It was a really affecting welcome that Bert Howard received from his few Gridley troopers. Dick Prescott, Tom Reade, Harry Hazelton and several others were quick to appear and to offer him their hands and heartiest congratulations.

Prescott, Holmes, Reade and Hazelton each wore on his left sleeve a black band of mourning, for no more had been heard of the missing submarines, and they mourned their friends, Darrin and Dalzell, as dead.

Barely had dark fallen when Bert's tiny command, along with other cavalry, started westward on a freight train, with what was left of the American artillery, the infantry and some

other branches of the service following in automobiles. The swift start was made fully fifteen minutes before the enemy became aware of the flight.

What of the fighting that followed? Was it possible for the Americans to recover from the humiliations they had already experienced at the hands of the invader? This narrative has been told, and the next picture in our war in the year 1920 must be related in the next volume of this series, which will be published under the title: "IN THE BATTLE FOR NEW YORK; Or, Uncle Sam's Boys in the Desperate Struggle for the Metropolis."

THE END

HENRY ALTEMUS COMPANY'S

**Best and Least Expensive
Books for Boys and Girls**

The Motor Boat Club Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

The keynote of these books is manliness. The stories are wonderfully entertaining, and they are at the same time sound and wholesome. No boy will willingly lay down an unfinished book in this series.

- 1 THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB OF THE KENNEBEC; Or,
The Secret of Smugglers' Island.
- 2 THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB AT NANTUCKET; Or, The
Mystery of the Dunstan Heir.
- 3 THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB OFF LONG ISLAND; Or, A
Daring Marine Game at Racing Speed.
- 4 THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB AND THE WIRELESS; Or,
The Dot, Dash and Dare Cruise.
- 5 THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB IN FLORIDA; Or, Laying
the Ghost of Alligator Swamp.
- 6 THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB AT THE GOLDEN GATE;
Or, A Thrilling Capture in the Great Fog.
- 7 THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB ON THE GREAT LAKES;
Or, The Flying Dutchman of the Big Fresh Water.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

Sold by all booksellers or sent postpaid on receipt of price.

Henry Altemus Company
1326-1336 Vine Street Philadelphia

Battleship Boys Series

By FRANK GEE PATCHIN

These stories throb with the life of young Americans on to-day's huge drab Dreadnaughts.

- 1 THE BATTLESHIP BOYS AT SEA; Or, Two Apprentices in Uncle Sam's Navy.
- 2 THE BATTLESHIP BOYS' FIRST STEP UPWARD; Or, Winning Their Grades as Petty Officers.
- 3 THE BATTLESHIP BOYS IN FOREIGN SERVICE; Or, Earning New Ratings in European Seas.
- 4 THE BATTLESHIP BOYS IN THE TROPICS; Or, Upholding the American Flag in a Honduras Revolution.
- 5 THE BATTLESHIP BOYS UNDER FIRE; Or, The Dash for the Besieged Kam Chau Mission.
- 6 THE BATTLESHIP BOYS IN THE WARDROOM; Or, Winning their Commissions as Line Officers.
- 7 THE BATTLESHIP BOYS WITH THE ADRIATIC CHASERS; Or, Blocking the Path of the Undersea Raiders.
- 8 THE BATTLESHIP BOYS' SKY PATROL; Or, Fighting the Hun from Above the Clouds.

Price, \$1.00 each

The Range and Grange Hustlers

By FRANK GEE PATCHIN

Have you any idea of the excitements, the glories of life on great ranches in the West? Any bright boy will "devour" the books of this series, once he has made a start with the first volume.

- 1 THE RANGE AND GRANGE HUSTLERS ON THE RANCH; Or, The Boy Shepherds of the Great Divide.
- 2 THE RANGE AND GRANGE HUSTLERS' GREATEST ROUND-UP; Or, Pitting Their Wits Against a Packers' Combine.
- 3 THE RANGE AND GRANGE HUSTLERS ON THE PLAINS; Or, Following the Steam Plows Across the Prairie.
- 4 THE RANGE AND GRANGE HUSTLERS AT CHICAGO; Or, The Conspiracy of the Wheat Pit.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

Submarine Boys Series

By VICTOR G. DURHAM

- 1 THE SUBMARINE BOYS ON DUTY; Or, Life on a Diving Torpedo Boat.
 - 2 THE SUBMARINE BOYS' TRIAL TRIP; Or, "Making Good" as Young Experts.
 - 3 THE SUBMARINE BOYS AND THE MIDDIES; Or, The Prize Detail at Annapolis.
 - 4 THE SUBMARINE BOYS AND THE SPIES; Or, Dodging the Sharks of the Deep.
 - 5 THE SUBMARINE BOYS' LIGHTNING CRUISE; Or, The Young Kings of the Deep.
 - 6 THE SUBMARINE BOYS FOR THE FLAG; Or, Deeding Their Lives to Uncle Sam.
 - 7 THE SUBMARINE BOYS AND THE SMUGGLERS; Or, Breaking Up the New Jersey Customs Frauds.
-

Grace Harlowe Overseas Series

- 1 GRACE HARLOWE OVERSEAS.
 - 2 GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE RED CROSS IN FRANCE.
 - 3 GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE MARINES AT CHATEAU THIERRY.
 - 4 GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY IN THE ARGONNE.
-

The College Girls Series

By JESSIE GRAHAM FLOWER, A.M.

- 1 GRACE HARLOWE'S FIRST YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE.
 - 2 GRACE HARLOWE'S SECOND YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE.
 - 3 GRACE HARLOWE'S THIRD YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE.
 - 4 GRACE HARLOWE'S FOURTH YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE.
 - 5 GRACE HARLOWE'S RETURN TO OVERTON CAMPUS.
 - 6 GRACE HARLOWE'S PROBLEM.
 - 7 GRACE HARLOWE'S GOLDEN SUMMER.
-
-

All these books are bound in Cloth and will be sent post-paid on receipt of only \$1.00 each.

Pony Rider Boys Series

By FRANK GEE PATCHIN

These tales may be aptly described the best books for boys and girls.

- 1 THE PONY RIDER BOYS IN THE ROCKIES; Or, The Secret of the Lost Claim.—2 THE PONY RIDER BOYS IN TEXAS; Or, The Velled Riddle of the Plains.—3 THE PONY RIDER BOYS IN MONTANA; Or, The Mystery of the Old Custer Trail.—4 THE PONY RIDER BOYS IN THE OZARKS; Or, The Secret of Ruby Mountain.—5 THE PONY RIDER BOYS IN THE ALKALI; Or, Finding a Key to the Desert Maze.—6 THE PONY RIDER BOYS IN NEW MEXICO; Or, The End of the Silver Trail.—7 THE PONY RIDER BOYS IN THE GRAND CANYON; Or, The Mystery of Bright Angel Gulch.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

The Boys of Steel Series

By JAMES R. MEARS

Each book presents vivid picture of this great industry. Each story is full of adventure and fascination.

- 1 THE IRON BOYS IN THE MINES; Or, Starting at the Bottom of the Shaft.—2 THE IRON BOYS AS FOREMEN; Or, Heading the Diamond Drill Shift.—3 THE IRON BOYS ON THE ORE BOATS; Or, Roughing It on the Great Lakes.—4 THE IRON BOYS IN THE STEEL MILLS; Or, Beginning Anew in the Cinder Pits.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

The Madge Morton Books

By AMY D. V. CHALMERS

- 1 MADGE MORTON—CAPTAIN OF THE MERRY MAID.
2 MADGE MORTON'S SECRET.
3 MADGE MORTON'S TRUST.
4 MADGE MORTON'S VICTORY.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

West Point Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

The principal characters in these narratives are manly, young Americans whose doings will inspire all boy readers.

- 1 DICK PRESCOTT'S FIRST YEAR AT WEST POINT; Or, Two Chums in the Cadet Gray.
- 2 DICK PRESCOTT'S SECOND YEAR AT WEST POINT; Or, Finding the Glory of the Soldier's Life.
- 3 DICK PRESCOTT'S THIRD YEAR AT WEST POINT; Or, Standing Firm for Flag and Honor.
- 4 DICK PRESCOTT'S FOURTH YEAR AT WEST POINT; Or, Ready to Drop the Gray for Shoulder Straps.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

Annapolis Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

The Spirit of the new Navy is delightfully and truthfully depicted in these volumes.

- 1 DAVE DARRIN'S FIRST YEAR AT ANNAPOLIS; Or, Two Plebe Midshipmen at the U. S. Naval Academy.
- 2 DAVE DARRIN'S SECOND YEAR AT ANNAPOLIS; Or, Two Midshipmen as Naval Academy "Youngsters."
- 3 DAVE DARRIN'S THIRD YEAR AT ANNAPOLIS; Or, Leaders of the Second Class Midshipmen.
- 4 DAVE DARRIN'S FOURTH YEAR AT ANNAPOLIS; Or, Headed for Graduation and the Big Cruise.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

The Young Engineers Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

The heroes of these stories are known to readers of the High School Boys Series. In this new series Tom Reade and Harry Hazelton prove worthy of all the traditions of Dick & Co.

- 1 THE YOUNG ENGINEERS IN COLORADO; Or, At Railroad Building in Earnest.
- 2 THE YOUNG ENGINEERS IN ARIZONA; Or, Laying Tracks on the "Man-Killer" Quicksand.
- 3 THE YOUNG ENGINEERS IN NEVADA; Or, Seeking Fortune on the Turn of a Pick.
- 4 THE YOUNG ENGINEERS IN MEXICO; Or, Fighting the Mine Swindlers.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

Boys of the Army Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

These books breathe the life and spirit of the United States Army of to-day, and the life, just as it is, is described by a master pen.

- 1 UNCLE SAM'S BOYS IN THE RANKS; Or, Two Recruits in the United States Army.
 - 2 UNCLE SAM'S BOYS ON FIELD DUTY; Or, Winning Corporal's Chevrons.
 - 3 UNCLE SAM'S BOYS AS SERGEANTS; Or, Handling Their First Real Commands.
 - 4 UNCLE SAM'S BOYS IN THE PHILIPPINES; Or, Following the Flag Against the Moros.
 - 6 UNCLE SAM'S BOYS AS LIEUTENANTS; Or, Serving Old Glory as Line Officers.
 - 7 UNCLE SAM'S BOYS WITH PERSHING; Or, Dick Prescott at Grips with the Boche.
 - 8 UNCLE SAM'S BOYS SMASH THE GERMANS; Or, Winding Up the Great War.
-

Dave Darrin Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

- 1 DAVE DARRIN AT VERA CRUZ; Or, Fighting With the U. S. Navy in Mexico.
 - 2 DAVE DARRIN ON MEDITERRANEAN SERVICE.
 - 3 DAVE DARRIN'S SOUTH AMERICAN CRUISE.
 - 4 DAVE DARRIN ON THE ASIATIC STATION.
 - 5 DAVE DARRIN AND THE GERMAN SUBMARINES.
 - 6 DAVE DARRIN AFTER THE MINE LAYERS; Or, Hitting the Enemy a Hard Naval Blow.
-

The Meadow-Brook Girls Series

By JANET ALDRIDGE

- 1 THE MEADOW-BROOK GIRLS UNDER CANVAS.
 - 2 THE MEADOW-BROOK GIRLS ACROSS COUNTRY.
 - 3 THE MEADOW-BROOK GIRLS AFLOAT.
 - 4 THE MEADOW-BROOK GIRLS IN THE HILLS.
 - 5 THE MEADOW-BROOK GIRLS BY THE SEA.
 - 6 THE MEADOW-BROOK GIRLS ON THE TENNIS COURTS.
-

All these books are bound in Cloth and will be sent post-paid on receipt of only \$1.00 each.

High School Boys Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

In this series of bright, crisp books a new note has been struck. Boys of every age under sixty will be interested in these fascinating volumes.

- 1 THE HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMEN; Or, Dick & Co.'s First Year Pranks and Sports.
- 2 THE HIGH SCHOOL PITCHER; Or, Dick & Co. on the Gridley Diamond.
- 3 THE HIGH SCHOOL LEFT END; Or, Dick & Co. Grilling on the Football Gridiron.
- 4 THE HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM; Or, Dick & Co. Leading the Athletic Vanguard.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

Grammar School Boys Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

This series of stories, based on the actual doings of grammar school boys, comes near to the heart of the average American boy.

- 1 THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL BOYS OF GRIDLEY; Or, Dick & Co. Start Things Moving.
- 2 THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL BOYS SNOWBOUND; Or, Dick & Co. at Winter Sports.
- 3 THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL BOYS IN THE WOODS; Or, Dick & Co. Trail Fun and Knowledge.
- 4 THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL BOYS IN SUMMER ATHLETICS; Or, Dick & Co. Make Their Fame Secure.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

High School Boys' Vacation Series

By H. IRVING HANCOCK

"Give us more Dick Prescott books!"

This has been the burden of the cry from young readers of the country over. Almost numberless letters have been received by the publishers, making this eager demand; for Dick Prescott, Dave Darrin, Tom Reade, and the other members of Dick & Co. are the most popular high school boys in the land. Boys will alternately thrill and chuckle when reading these splendid narratives.

- 1 THE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' CANOE CLUB; Or, Dick & Co.'s Rivals on Lake Pleasant.
- 2 THE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS IN SUMMER CAMP; Or, The Dick Prescott Six Training for the Gridley Eleven.
- 3 THE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' FISHING TRIP; Or, Dick & Co. in the Wilderness.
- 4 THE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' TRAINING HIKE; Or, Dick & Co. Making Themselves "Hard as Nails."

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

The Circus Boys Series

By EDGAR B. P. DARLINGTON

Mr. Darlington's books breathe forth every phase of an intensely interesting and exciting life.

- 1 THE CIRCUS BOYS ON THE FLYING RINGS; Or, Making the Start in the Sawdust Life.
- 2 THE CIRCUS BOYS ACROSS THE CONTINENT; Or, Winning New Laurels on the Tanbark.
- 3 THE CIRCUS BOYS IN DIXIE LAND; Or, Winning the Plaudits of the Sunny South.
- 4 THE CIRCUS BOYS ON THE MISSISSIPPI; Or, Afloat with the Big Show on the Big River.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

The High School Girls Series

By JESSIE GRAHAM FLOWER, A. M.

These breezy stories of the American High School Girl take the reader fairly by storm.

- 1 GRACE HARLOWE'S PLEBE YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL; Or, The Merry Doings of the Oakdale Freshman Girls.
- 2 GRACE HARLOWE'S SOPHOMORE YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL; Or, The Record of the Girl Chums in Work and Athletics.
- 3 GRACE HARLOWE'S JUNIOR YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL; Or, Fast Friends in the Sororities.
- 4 GRACE HARLOWE'S SENIOR YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL; Or, The Parting of the Ways.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

The Automobile Girls Series

By LAURA DENT CRANE

No girl's library—no family book-case can be considered at all complete unless it contains these sparkling twentieth-century books.

- 1 THE AUTOMOBILE GIRLS AT NEWPORT; Or, Watching the Summer Parade.—2 THE AUTOMOBILE GIRLS IN THE BERKSHIRES; Or, The Ghost of Lost Man's Trail.—3 THE AUTOMOBILE GIRLS ALONG THE HUDSON; Or, Fighting Fire in Sleepy Hollow.—4 THE AUTOMOBILE GIRLS AT CHICAGO; Or, Winning Out Against Heavy Odds.—5 THE AUTOMOBILE GIRLS AT PALM BEACH; Or, Proving Their Mettle Under Southern Skies.—6 THE AUTOMOBILE GIRLS AT WASHINGTON; Or, Checkmating the Plots of Foreign Spies.

Cloth, Illustrated

Price, per Volume, \$1.00

Loaned and donated
by:

Miss Muriel Bishop
881 East Main St.,
Newport,
Vermont.
U. S. A.

